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fusion, if we do have it, springs from our associations with the word 'anthropology'. 000

We are prone to think of the anthropologist as a collector of strange facts about savage, and at best, semi-civilized peoples. When analogues to these facts appear from time to time among civilized men we regard them as superstitious survivals at best, worthy of our study only as *curiosa*. Why then an anthropology of modern Ireland? What-^[181]ever we may think of her, we cannot include Ireland among the primitive and barbarous peoples. If we go on to relate primitive survivals to the way of life of the Irish country-people, we certainly do not condemn them wholesale as barbarians, nor can we rightfully regard them as primitive.

If this is the case, our associations with the word 'anthropology' must be at fault. So let us set about revising them.

To make the revision is really to explain the development of anthropological science. In common with the rest of us, the anthropologists have gone through something of a mental and moral revolution. The changes in the conceptual basis of science, rapidly spreading in the last thirty years, have not passed them by.

Long ago it was necessary to give up all hope of establishing unilinear evolution. The student of man had very early to admit that the course of humanity's growth was no simple straight path. At first he had thought of the primitive as a backward

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pologist avoids all explanations except those which arise out of his observations of what men do, and if he accepts them only when he can test them again against observed behaviour, he will be, if only imperfectly, in the main line of scientific development.

Before one makes a frontal attack, it is good tactics to survey one's ground. One likes to know what interest it holds in store.

Ireland, particularly Celtic southern Ireland, has always had a fascination for most of us. The cities, particularly Dublin, the last stronghold of the art of conversation, are as charming as the countryside. But it is the country districts which occupy us here.

Most of us probably know at least four countryside in Ireland. Like Caesar we divide our Gaul. But the divisions we make are not geographical. Our four Irelands are lands of the spirit.

Perhaps our first Ireland is the mystic land of the past. This is the land of the 'Celtic twilight', the country of Synge and Yeats and Stephens. It is the seat of an age-old tradition, of the remains of a once brilliant Celtic civilization. Literature has taught us to look for this land in the barren moors and rugged mountains of the west, among the tiny white cabins of Connemara and along the misty headlands of Kerry and West Cork. It is the Ireland

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538 of Aran and the Blaskets. There a remnant of the sagas and hero-tales can still be heard, a wandering poet sang but yesterday in the lilt of Blind Raftery. There old men and old women sitting by turf fires still spin tales of banshees and the good people; and just the other day in Daniel Corkery's hidden Munster the hedge school-master and the wandering scholar had Ovid and Horace at his tongue's tip. And there too the riders to the sea go down to their deaths amid the keening women, whose language rings to us of simple, old-world poetry long ago passed from our own tongues.

A second Ireland is a gay, full-blooded picture, though some among the nationalists dislike it. It is the Ireland of the merry and happy-go-lucky present. Handled badly, it becomes the land of the 'stage-Irishman', that buffoonish figure which the nation's pride so justly resents. But handled well, by a Lady Gregory, a George Birmingham, and on the stage by the Abbey Players, it is a world of its own. In it, innocent boasting, the excitement of a race-meeting, the hurly-burly of a fair, the flashing wit of a court-room, and the staccato thunder of a political campaign, reveal a talkative, mercurial, witty people, amusing and intelligent, romantic and gallant.

181 The third Ireland most of us know is a more serious scene. One might even call it a grimmer land. It is a sober, hard-working land of minute towns and small farms upon a soil not always

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grateful. It is a land of hard realities. This Ireland /81
is subject to hot flashes of anger and dispute which
throw into relief deep-lying hatreds and fierce
loyalties. We all know something of the Land War
and Sinn Fein and the bitter internecine strife of
the Trouble. If we know anything of Ireland's
history we see these rough upheavals of a tranquil
scene as great punctuation marks upon a red page
of struggle lasting seven hundred years. This is the
Ireland of bitter economic fate and political unrest.
Much of this can be laid at England's door, but not
all. The Ireland of the Irish is no more free of
internal strife than any other land.

Most of us recognize a fourth Ireland as well, /81
especially those who are Catholics. It is the Ireland 771
of the Faith, the Island of Saints and Scholars. It 781
is the land of the devout, where word and deed
breathe a religious fervour which most of us have
forgotten. This is the land of holy wells and
pilgrimages and roadside shrines. Well-filled
churches rise above every hamlet now and the
black-frocked priest is a familiar friendly figure.
To many of us, perhaps a paradox lies here. Fierce
love of political liberty goes hand in hand with a
deep devotion to the most authoritarian of Christian
creeds.

Nor is this the only paradox in a land of sur- /81
prises where even the sun and sky are inconsistent.
The beauty of the Irish landscape lies in the never-
ending change of colour. A momentary break of sun

● 181 transforms the sky from dull yellow to bright, rain-washed blue. It lights a hillside to brilliant green, or mottles it in brown and green and mauve. A moment later it disappears, dashing the sky back again to mournful purples and misty greys. So it is with the Irish character. What is too harshly called the 'superstition' of Irish folklore coexists with Catholic piety; a puritanical morality goes hand in hand with the hilarity of a race-meeting. The loyalty too harshly named 'clannishness' runs side by side with the personal acquisitiveness of a peasant proprietorship. Small wonder then the Irish feel no foreigner will ever fully understand.

000 This is the terrain in which I hope to campaign. If we are to make an attempt at a whole view, we must see the country whole. I must try to show you all four Irelands.

For the inhabitants of this fourfold land are 'Irishmen All', as George Birmingham once named a book. But unlike his characters they are all the same people. The inhabitants of the countryside dwell in all four of our lands of the spirit. The division we make is only illusive. It marks our interests, not the realities of the Irishman's life.

That life, so various, so capable of being looked at from many angles, affords many fascinating questions to us in pursuance of our study. What are its laws? How does it relate to old custom and belief?

This people preserves an unbroken ancient tradi-

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Luogh is remote. It is nearly half a day's tramp ³⁶¹
along the roads from its market town, Ennistymon. ⁶²¹
Even Ennistymon is no metropolis. It is a sprawl- ⁴⁹⁴
ing village of 1200 people. Neither bus nor train
runs between the two.

But Luogh is not entirely isolated by this re- ¹⁸⁵
moteness. It does not entirely escape modernity. ⁶²¹
Pleasure-bent motorists from the cities drive ²³⁴
through along the cliffs. One can see Atlantic
liners standing-to just outside Galway Bay. Many
of Luogh's farms have a horse-drawn mowing
machine, out of an English steel works, and some
of the houses own a mechanical cream separator,
even though next door a wooden hand churn is still
in use which looks no different from those found
deep in the bogs.

But modern tools do not make the life of Luogh. ¹⁸⁵
They ease it perhaps, and work a slow effect. But ⁶²¹
in a short stay one cannot see that change. One's
attention turns to the life into which these few
strays of modernity find their way.

For Luogh is like many another community of ⁶²¹
small farms over Clare and southern and western ¹⁸⁴
Ireland. Some lie closer to urban centres, some are ¹⁸¹
even more remote. Many are better off; some few
are poorer. Some have kept the Irish language
better; others have abandoned it altogether for the
brogue. But they all have the 'sweet blas' of Gaelic
still on their tongues and speak an idiom embedded
in their common folk life.

● 181 I did not know this as I came to Luogh. But I was to learn it soon in Luogh and in other communities in County Clare. Later I was to find it so even more widely; in newspapers, in novels, in court records, in statistical reports, in political bombasts. It was a way of life with its own laws which included Luogh and the Blaskets and even the fertile small farms of rich Tipperary.

114 When I first came to Luogh I knew only that in this remote little community of small farmers I should find something of the old tradition still alive. My learning was a piecemeal process — a sketching out of wider and wider ramifications of the observations which came my way.

It is this process to which I wish to devote the remainder of this lecture. It is a process in which you can follow me. Perhaps better than anything else it will prepare us for an anthropological study of Irish rural life.

Let me illustrate this process with two examples. I shall call them the 'west room' and the 'old man's curse'. Both of them are related to old custom and both will serve to show the process by which one lays bare the rural life of which old custom is a part.

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361 The house to which my road into Luogh finally led was a typical small farmer's cottage. It was one of twenty-six in Luogh. It was the seat of a small farm of sixteen acres (with eight more in the valley), 'the place of four cows and a horse', as the country-

551 Another old fellow, a leader in his village, could be
888 described by a neighbour as follows:

"That old man is a typical Irishman. He is a saint and there isn't a thought against anyone in him. He is always in a good humour and if he went to town to take a drink he could stand in the one place till he dropped. He is as harmless as a child. He and his friend Roche are two level-headed farmers and they have met every sort of trouble. If you are in doubt about any advice in farming, you can go to them and they will give as good advice as you can get. It would pay a young man to listen to them."

● 181 I have quoted this rural eulogy for a reason. It
551 shows much better than words of mine could how
888 the speaker's mind could flow uninterruptedly, without any sense of transition, from ethical judgment to agricultural advice. For 'saintliness' of this kind is a matter of filling a social role. But it is one's role for the community that counts. That role runs all the way from peaceful and friendly demeanour to directing farm work. There is nothing individual in it; it is the behaviour the community patterns about the old man. It is his *noblesse oblige*. That the word 'saint' should be borrowed from religion should surprise no one. It is merely proof that one society survives in western civilization in which theology and the popular mind have not yet suffered a divorce. The early Puritan and the ancient Roman would have understood such a state of affairs.

the small farmers as being a 'cut' below themselves; consequently, his untidiness is a byword among them. One version of the story goes, in synopsis, as follows:

"Many families moved into a herdsman's place, but they were all chased out of it. Finally, one family moved in, cleaned up the house, and a 'paving path' round it. A little old woman visits the wife, borrows a cooking-pot, and is similarly well treated. In gratitude she explains that the woman of the house and her husband will always prosper and never be molested, because they alone of all the families had cleaned up the place where 'they' walk."

In this way the values of daily life are projected into and reinforced by the supernatural world. The same state of affairs holds good even in the convention of social intercourse. The vocabulary of the countryman is full of homely pieties. On entering a house the proper greeting is "God bless all here". On coming upon another at work, one says, "God bless the work". Similarly, "God spare you the health" is 'put on' anyone who 'coors' with you. Any praise of person, child, or animal is accompanied with a "God bless it"; any mention of unpleasantness or danger is followed with some such homily as "God bless the mark", and so on. If one omits such pieties, one is sure to rouse resentment in the listeners. For one must remember that emotion supports these conventions. But the

castor-oil first, for he is a rational man. But if 183
castor-oil is unavailing, then other means can be
tried. He seizes upon a symbol of normal associa-
tions and habitual undisturbed security. The means
he adopts restores not the cow so much as it does
the peace of mind of him who uses it.

And the belief he holds makes a logical synthesis
between this act and the cause of his disturbance.
It fits them both into a symbolic order above and
beyond, yet closely bound up with, the order of his
own life. Put into words, this synthesis takes causal
form. "There is great power in a hazel-stick", he
says. "It drives 'them' away." And the statement
is perfectly true, in the logic of emotions.

In some such way as this, ever broader areas of 181 ●
his associations with normal social life are given 183
'power'. They are incorporated into belief and
wield the same forces of restoring and upsetting
that life as do the good people, whose attributes
they become. Events, personalities, landmarks, are
brought into this order, in one way or another.
Nearly everything here below comes to be pro-
jected, in imagination traditionally refurbished,
into the other world of awe and wonder and mys-
terious 'power'. The countryman relates himself to
the things so projected through their place in his
belief; he knows what to do about them and finds
his regard for them fashioned in the common folk
faith.

The fairy-belief becomes a world-view, a *Welt-*

● 181 *anschauung*, in which all experience has a place in
183 the logic of emotional associations. Thus one old
181 fellow summed up a discussion of the sea creatures
183 which still haunt the western coasts of Ireland:
821 "Everything that does be on the land is in the sea,
too, if we could see them". This world-view in-
corporates the world into the life the countryman
follows and knows. To the same old fellow, winds
along the Clare and Galway border that separates
Munster and Connaught provinces could appear
as the battles of fairy hosts, for do not men today
still remember human battles and still taunt the
men of the other province in joke and banter? The
rustle of a breeze and the flitting of bats in a ruin
where men lived and died is not mere noise; it is
still part of human life. One old fellow described
to me the experience of 'them' that he got at close
quarters, when he lived near the ruin of Bally-
vaughan workhouse:

"They were so plentiful there that everybody
living round it and myself got so used to them that
we wouldn't mind them at all. The place is full
of them and everywhere you go there is a door and
long windows in the cowl, and you hear them going
in and out. There was a great lot of people died in it
long ago in the bad times. They are in every room
and you hear them on all sides of you. I got so
used to it, I never minded them at all, but I heard
them every day."

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823 The great cliffs of Moher on the Clare coast are
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a landmark notable enough for many a legend, but
the tales of it that best survive are those that relate
it to the life of the present and express in the fairy-
belief its danger to human life and property. 823
"There's somebody lost," I was told, "off every bit 183
of the cliffs. In the old days the men used to go 181
down often [for wood and salvage]. They used to 776
go down on their own ropes. . . . There was a
fellow over in Liscannor who would go down at any
time of day or night. He used to go down for lost
sheep or lambs. One day a child fell off Aillena-
searrach and he went down for the body . . . but
when he came up he said he'd never go down again
because every rock down below was covered with
people sitting on it. People out of the sea they were.
. . . Two little girls were lost looking for flowers
the fairies put there to grow. The flowers aren't
there at all, but are put there just to draw people
over the cliffs."

Thus belief and rite in folklore conspire to a
common end. They provide the countryman with
a world-view in which his regard for things and
scenes and events is charged with the emotional
forces necessary in his social life. 181
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But as we have seen again and again throughout
our whole discussion, the sentiments he holds are
organized first and foremost round his fellows: the
members of his family, household, kindred, and
the community. It is toward them that his habit is
fashioned and in his relation to them that his social

- 181 order takes its form. Consequently, we should ex-
- 183 pect fairy-belief and rite to symbolize the regard he
- 176 has for his fellows even more strongly than that he

holds to the non-human associations of his life.

The expectation is amply borne out. Fairy-belief is first and foremost a symbolism of social life. In the logic of emotional identifications, it organizes, directs, and controls the feelings of human beings for their fellows.

- Thus fairy power and dangerous influence are
- strongest at times when the interest of human
- beings in their fellows is strongest. With every
- change overtaking the individual in his course
- through life among his fellows, the supernatural
- world steps in. At such times as birth, growing-up,
- marriage, becoming a parent, growing old and
- dying, belief catches the countryman in a web of
- precautions and reminders which signalize force-
- fully the importance of the change. For example,
- 181 the birth of a child is not just another event in
- 183 nature. It is a change of vital importance to the
- 851 family group, and indirectly to the community.
- 176 It is cause for rejoicing and congratulation, but it
- is cause, too, for resolve and determination in the
- face of new duties. It brings a new orientation in
- the lives of those who welcome the newcomer.
- Their relations to one another undergo develop-
- ment; they must henceforth learn new ways which
- include the newcomer and which prepare a place
- for him in the life of his fellows.

Consequently, rural ceremony signalizes the event. Custom brings together those concerned for rejoicing, for recognition of the place of the newcomer in the group, for an expression of the sentiments that unite them all. The rural 'christening' is no mere idle jollification; it is a secular baptism, as important for social life as is the Sacrament of Baptism for religion. Naturally, then, fairy-belief is represented very strongly. It surrounds the crucial event of birth and its consequences with a hundred necessities of action which carry with them powerful emotional dispositions. Fear, awe, wonder, religious feeling, and plain caution can all be pressed into service to mould the countryman into an acceptance of the new state of affairs; the logic of belief fits these emotions into the countryman's world-view.

The good people are particularly active at such times as this. Every association with birth is infused with power and danger. Even the midwife who attends becomes a magic figure; the aura that surrounds the dangerous and crucial event invests her entire personality. She can command the fairies, disperse their attacks, travel through the air, transfer labour pains at will to a truculent or negligent husband. She is in communication with the fairy powers; in tale and story she often finds her ministrations commandeered by them and her person wafted off into the forts and raths to attend a fairy-woman there. She herself may deny all this; but it

181 is true, none the less, in belief. Like all else at birth,
183 she is linked to the good people, and in the linkage
776 an explanation is given for the identity of the
844 emotional associations which surround both her
and them.

(81 Similarly, all other crucial changes in social life,
183 as well as those of the religious life, come to fit into
776 the same scheme for many of the country-people
852 who still follow the old tradition. The good people
figure in them all.

Thus, First Communion and Confirmation—
events of first magnitude in the life of the devout
countryman—bring changes in emotional well-
being; they bestow a real, if mysterious and holy,
strength. This, of course, is first of all a part of
religious experience. But the events are also accom-
panied, in the countryside, by changes in one's
relations to one's fellows, in traditional social
organization. The child is separated first from
others of opposite sex after First Communion; he
is introduced to full farm work and, very often,
leaves school after Confirmation. His fellows in
family and community must henceforward have a
new regard for him and treat him differently. So,
in these changes, the good people have their role,
too. Precautions against their influence reinforce
one's dependence upon a symbolic order which
incorporates these changes. They make definite
and unforgettable the magnitude of the change and
the new dispositions which must be learned. Thus,
Again, emotion is enlisted in the fashioning of
social habit

again, emotion is enlisted in the fashioning of social habit.

If we leave aside marriage, where folk-custom and folk-belief are no less important toward the same ends, we can devote our attention to the greatest change of all. Death brings the greatest disturbance in social habit. It shakes emotional equilibrium to its foundation. Yet society must allow for death; it must provide an orderly transition and continuance.

The devout Irishman, of course, finds his greatest consolation in his Catholic Faith. He knows the fate of his loved ones. His religion teaches him how to communicate with them, in the Communion of Saints, through prayer. Faith heals his hurt and it gives him a way of filling the void death creates.

Yet, as I have said, he has room in his heart and mind for the fairy-belief too. Social life must take account of death no less than religion. When death removes one of the human beings to whom he is related as brother, friend or fellow, it leaves behind the traces of sentiment and habit that were once bonds of relationship and association. These must be reformed, and in the reformation a new synthesis between the dead member of the group and the living be found. The countryman resembles us all in this respect; he cannot forget 'the old familiar faces'. He must have an explanation in the world-view of folklore and folk-custom for

181 the effect they still exert upon him after they are
183 gone.

761 So the dead join 'them'. On the border-line
776 between the mundane world and the mysteries of
[775] Faith, they find a place in the ranks of the good
people, as the misnamed fairies are often called.
They are the denizens of rath and fort and hill
and cave. There is nothing fundamentally incom-
patible between this and religious belief, however
folklore may escape the control of dogma and
sometimes, in its humbler vein, run counter to it.
The dead do affect the living, in memory and in
tradition. Death is the 'other world' to which we
are all advancing. As one fellow could say in a burst
of poetic imagery growing out of folk-belief: "The
old people in the west room are going down with
the sun".

Why not indeed; when we remember that the
good people are not always by any means evil and
forbidding? They exert their power for both good
and evil. They bring reward as well as punishment.
The countryman has friends among them as he has
friends among men in this world. An Aran woman
put the belief for Lady Gregory in words which
transport earthly loyalties to the other world.
"There's often fighting heard about the house when
one is sick. That is what we call the fighting of
friends, for we believe it is the friends and enemies
of the sick person fighting for him."

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775 Indeed, the same aids that make up habit and

THE GOOD PEOPLE

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give base to sentiment in mundane affairs can be 181 ●
 projected into the after-world. One must act to- 183
 ward 'them' in death as one acts toward the living; 775
 one must do the 'friendly' thing. Thus they can tell 776
 a story in Luogh of a man there who they say "was
 walking along the road and he saw the ghost of his
 brother. He didn't say anything to it and it walked
 home with him all in silence. They sat at the fire
 for a long time, the [living] man waiting for the
 other to go, so he could go to bed. Finally, the dead
 man said: 'You have put me to great trouble tonight
 by not saluting me when we met. I must go now
 and now I won't be able to defend you in the
 council in the rath.' And it was true for him, too:
 the cow that was ailing with the man was taken the
 next week."

Thus, you see, one can envision 'them' both in 181
 mystic terms and in terms sometimes very bald and 183
 intimate indeed. The younger people in Luogh still 753
 follow the old belief, though they leave its expres- 776
 sion to their elders. Yet they could explain the
 tumour on an old man's head in words which
 show how near 'the other people' are and how
 direct is the aid one's friends among them can
 give:

"Old Seumas was coming along the road drunk
 and he met a crowd of them on the road and one of
 them slapped him. If he'd taken the slap he'd be all
 right but he took off his coat and dared any one of
 them to stand down to him. They beat him and

181 gave him a terrible knock over the poll. One of
183 them that was great friends with him saved
753 him."
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Nor are 'they' always fearsome, even in their
181 most wondrous apparitions. The dead are too
183 much a part of life in rural Ireland for that. For
775 the old people they are too near; too many friends
have crossed the line between this world and the
next.

Thus the dead may come to cover nearly every
association of life; in the eyes of some of the old
people, the other world of wonders where the
'other people' reign spreads all about them. To the
initiate in such mysteries there is nothing to fear.
Let me give you my record of one conversation of
mine with a very old man of North Clare, a man of
clear mind and great folk-learning. His answers to
my naïve questions will show you how well he felt,
accepted and expressed the symbolic order of the
countryside:

I asked what a 'cowl' was. "They are the houses
where the family has died out of them. People
would live in them if they wasn't too bad, falling
down and dirty. You often see old people sitting
in them." "What people?" I asked. "The people
that used to be in it," he replied. "Do you mean
ghosts?" He answered me scornfully: "You might
see lights in the cowl and you going along the road
at night and you pass people you don't know and
you can't tell if they are ghosts or not. Of all the

people you pass in the town, how would you know what it is they are?"

Only the young men, like myself, would be frightened by this uncertainty in rural Ireland. For all but the old people, such mysteries are awesome and compelling. Once again, folk-belief fashions itself for a social end. In belief the believers unconsciously agree upon an emotional organization of human relations; folklore expresses once again the organization of the community upon age and upon the past. The old couple who move in among the fairy influences and the symbols of family tradition and sentiment in the west room, the old people in whom rural kinship is centred and through whom sentiment is directed to the mystic past of ancestral blood lineage, the old men and women round whose influence the local community patterns its local life, need not fear greatly the imagery that symbolizes the very place they occupy. Rather they can come to immerse themselves in it. They grow very learned in this lore. They are the ones who sometimes come to manipulate it. They are themselves, sometimes, half fairy. 'Wise men' and 'wise women' are always old. It is no accident that the commonest representation of the fairy power is an old man or woman. They are the initiates in the mysteries of the fairy faith.

In this fact one can see the final synthesis between social habit and belief. Rural kinship organizes men and women in a common orientation

- 181 backward and upward toward the dead and the
183 ancestral. The community bestows ever greater
888 status and influence as one progresses further and
776 further toward the age-grade of the old, in whom
775 tradition and precedent are preserved and expressed.
In the sphere of credence and emotion the fairy
faith acts to the same end and is so designed.
The design, in this instance as in all the others,
is not conscious; no one has planned it. It is
a design drawn from the social order and acting
back upon it. Its imagery is traditional, but its
efficacy is of the present. And for that reason it
lives.

Thus, in the identification between the old, the
dead and the influences which affect the goods,
the conducts and the values of the countryman's
life, the symbolic order is completed. Folk-belief, in
the ancient fairy-cult, with its age-old imagery,
makes a complete emotional synthesis, overlying
and reacting back upon the sentiment and habit
out of which it springs again and again with each
generation that learns the old way of life. Con-
sequently, each new generation works a change
upon it; elements of the synthesis undergo con-
stant re-embellishment and shift of emphasis.
Both old and young are controlled by it, but each
in a different way. Today the young are sceptical
and a little rebellious; they repudiate much of the
[178] older imagery. All that the Church condemns in
the 'pisherogues', they also condemn. Today folk-
belief is undergoing MARKED change like all else in
this world, like all else in Ireland.

belief is undergoing marked change like all else¹⁷⁸
in this world, like all else in Ireland.¹⁸¹ ●
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But that does not mean the death-knell of folk-¹⁷⁵
lore, as some students of folklore seem to think.¹⁷⁶
Far from that, it means only that a symbolic order
like any growth in human life must change and
grow onward. New forms and new imagery will
grow up to clothe in emotional terms the neces-
sary reformations of habit and sentiment in social
life, and new syntheses will fashion new belief,
changing the old or supplanting it inch by inch.

One can see this process at work in rural Ireland¹⁷⁸
today. Those who repudiate the fairies repudiate¹⁸³
only the outmoded symbols, the outworn images.
They do not deny the necessity of a symbolic order
in their own lives. The student of man is coming to
think today that they could not do so, because no
people can. There must always be some socially
efficacious organization of the sentiments of social
life in the logic of belief and imagery. Belief pro-
vides first of all a conception of life; then, and then
only, does it carry on to become a conception of the
world. But life among men includes emotional
attitudes at once very necessary and very satis-
fying; one can starve the spirit only so far. And for
that reason the logic of a social order is not that of
science and prose, it is that of emotion. Con-
sequently, those of the countryside who repudiate
the older symbols merely demand that their
emphasis be shifted. They do not cry out for bald

000 other with the keen at the wake-house.

764 The goods of household and farm suffer incor-
183 poration into emotional symbolism once more;
● 181 precautions must be taken to protect them and
776 prevent their going beyond with the lost one. Time
and place of death are clothed with a hundred
supernatural associations.

The reciprocities which make up friendship and give status in the community get full play. Every man, in death, can command a multitude. To stay away, to make no recognition of the day, is to give deadly affront. Every 'right Irishman' turns and walks, if only a few steps, along with the procession. In towns, all the blinds upon the street are drawn and shop-fronts are boarded, in recognition. In the Gaelic tongue, indeed, one and the same word does service for both funeral and multitude. And in the fairy-lore "there is never a funeral but the other people are at it, too, walking along behind". Many a countryman, steeped in the old lore, sees in a whirlwind or puff of mist a *socraid sidhe* or fairy-funeral.

He knows thereby that somewhere the chief expression of traditional social life is calling the countrymen together through a whole countryside for a re-enactment, both solemn and gay, of their sentiments about their fellows and about their view of life and death and destiny.

THE REAL IRELAND

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Even the elaborately produced and comprehensive Handbook of the Irish Free State (1927), which includes chapters on folklore and literature, remains silent on folk-culture and its significance for an understanding of Irish problems. 114

Our knowledge of the Irish countryside will advance only through field-study and the mapping of our findings. The time has not yet come when one can prepare maps of cultural distributions, but this is the end in view. Our school-books and atlases still give us maps which are purely political and administrative, for the political outlook has kept scientific interests at bay. We need maps of house-types and styles of furniture, of farm implements and the lay-out of fields and fences, of boat-types, of dialects and superstitions, and so on; and we must study these distributions both against the physical and spiritual environments of Ireland and against the wider background of their overseas connexions.

Viewed in its wider setting Ireland is part of the north-western or "Atlantic" province of European folk-culture. The climatic background of storms and mists makes it one with the coastlands and peninsulas which range from Galicia through Brittany and Highland Britain to the fiords of Norway. Everywhere in this region the sea is close at hand: by it man can both gain a livelihood and escape out into a wider world. On land the cultivation of wheat is near its climatic limits, and the dependence on spring-sown cereals greatly simplified the old schemes of crop-rotation. The folding of stock around the winter homestead was not complicated by the necessity of protecting the corn from their depredations. Animal husbandry and stock products are the pivot of rural economy in this humid fringe of Europe, a fact which, together with the independence nourished by man's association with the sea, helped to keep the north-western province out of the bondage of the feudal system. 101

While the simplicity of stock-raising equipment has limited the development of the arts and crafts as compared with, say, the south-eastern province of Europe, or even lowland England, it brings its compensations. As Professor 181 ●

- 181 Fleure writes of Wales, another section of "The Celtic Fringe": "the isolated rural communities are, of themselves, poor in material resources, and their efforts have, therefore, not until recently gone into great buildings or sculpture or painting or orchestral music, all demanding a large equipment. Rather have they found their scope in poetry and oratory and song, arts in which the poorest labourer can often compete on fairly equal terms with his richer neighbours. In this way, and in others as well, poverty has been a safeguard of an intensely democratic feeling as well as a help towards the survival of the language and its associations." In the field of human export, too, Ireland's products are scholars, doctors and poets as well as spade-workers.

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There are, as we shall try to show, many other features of Irish life which can be related to the pastoral tradition. Because of its value as fodder and for reasons of soil and climate, oats is the "corn" crop of Atlantic Europe. Apart from the value of oats as food for livestock, oatmeal in various forms has been and still is largely consumed, and its baking into thin pan bread over an open fire instead of in an oven has helped to preserve the prehistoric open hearth with its varied and interesting gear and traditions. Ignoring the literary and archaeological evidence, many writers have assumed that the inhabitants of ancient Ireland were entirely pastoral and nomadic. On this topic much solemn nonsense has been written, and it gained wide currency because it seemed both to condemn the Irish and to corroborate the prevailing view of man's cultural evolution from hunter to agriculturist through a stage of pastoral nomadism. It now seems certain that man learnt the elements of cultivation at least as soon as he learnt how to domesticate animals, and in the diffusion of these ideas through Europe from the Near East, Ireland received the germs of both sources of food-production at about the same period, let us say 4,000 years ago. There are many signs that in Ireland's dark and middle ages cattle played an even greater role in rural life than in earlier prehistory and later history, but at all times the unit of the fixed family

[Text CONTINUES TOP OF P. 10]

114 settlement, the baile or townland, kept its significance and its
221 importance. In many cases what has passed for nomadism
has been the ancient and normal practice of seasonal move-
ment to the hill pastures, which is still not entirely abandoned
and has left many traces in the life and landscape of the
country (Chapter 6).

181 In essentials Ireland is and has been a peasant country,
462 and it may be well to examine objectively some of the general
characteristics of peasant society. A permanent link with the
soil on which man lives and works is the essence of a peasantry ;
and in this work of the fields woman co-operates with man.
For her, however, field work is a secondary task since her main
interests must lie in the house and in the milking of the stock.
Work with spade and plough and the care of the draught
animals is for the men, although carrying—necessarily done
by women in primitive communities where the men must
have their hands free to use their weapons—often remains an
activity of the peasant woman where not entirely superseded
by animal transport. Where fishing and shore-collecting
engage the men's attention the women's sphere of action and
responsibilities are widened.

181 Among tasks in which the women of some peasantries
323 play a leading part is the making of domestic pottery, but
this tradition, though strong in Neolithic Ireland, gave way to
the use of metal " pots " and vessels of wood, the making of
which was the work of the men. Nor have local survivals of
hand-made pottery, like the Barvas ware of the Hebrides,
been recorded here.

181 Periodic gatherings for exchange and social intercourse
443 are a feature of peasant life which has contributed to the
796 growth of towns. The immemorial meetings in fairs and
markets have been weakened by modern means of transport
and by government marketing boards ; and in some parts of
the country the whole fabric of rural society is being under-
mined in consequence. As in North Africa to-day, the fairs
were often held near some ancient burial place, and the
assemblies were linked with religious festivals which brought

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942

ER6 Rural Irish ER6

THE REAL IRELAND

II

people together. Seasonal festivals celebrating the major operations of the agricultural calendar are a primary part of peasant life: thus spring and autumn were the main fair seasons. In the licence permitted at these gatherings we may detect an echo of the ritual of fertility magic designed to ensure the success of seedtime and harvest. 181
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Sympathetic magic, already present in the minds of the cave-artists of the Old Stone Age, who painted life-like pictures of animals in the hope of good hunting, may be defined as the symbolic carrying out of certain deeds in order to promote success in another field of action. A peasant community is fully conscious of its dependence on the powers that bring rain and sunshine: these powers must be conciliated and encouraged. In the face of the untamed ocean in particular, man's superstitious regard for the menace of nature dies hard, while the survival of wakes for the dead, of the veneration of trees, wells and standing stones, of customs concerning cattle and fire, is a lasting tribute to the power of magic. 181
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From the sociological view-point the idea of sympathetic magic has had an important consequence in the tendency, common to all peasantries, to regard child-bearing as part of the ritual necessary to bring success in cultivation. The large families of rural Ireland are one aspect of this; another is the ill-omen attached to unmarried women. Barrenness tends to be regarded as a curse and a disgrace. But the years since the famine have seen great changes in the ages of marriage—the average of 29 for Irish women is one of the highest in the world—and in the proportions between the sexes: this is a subject badly in need of investigation. Statistical and economic studies we must have, but we need also to regard man as something more than a profit-making being. Peasant society is only to a limited extent drawn into the world of money: rural debts are often merely the sign of a social obligation. It is with the maintenance and continuity of society that the peasant community is concerned: hence its importance for the future of civilisation. 181
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While communal schemes and the manifold rights and duties of the peasant have been disturbed by landlordism and 181
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- 181 individual ownership they have by no means entirely collapsed.
 476 The principle of service, of mutual aid within the local family groups, survives; the element of competition is reduced to a minimum. Though the old social laws have been "abolished" by acts of parliament, such external decrees could destroy only the superficial features and hardly touched the minds in which these customs were rooted. The primary unit of land division—the townland—is still a very real thing; and as the townland retains its Gaelic name even in the districts of Dublin and Belfast, so there survives beyond the city's influence the social fabric of the townland community. Reeves and Joyce have argued that the careful subdivision of Irish land points to the existence of a considerable settled population in remote antiquity, and recent archaeological research supports this view. There are no less than 62,205 townlands in the country; their size, which varies from curiosities of less than an acre to large tracts of moorland of 1,000 acres, averages 325 acres.

181 The townlands in turn group themselves into baronies
 631 corresponding to the petty kingdoms of old. Writers tell us
 291 that even into the 19th century one barony could be easily distinguished from another by the dresses peculiar to each. Thus there were the dark blue and damson of Cork and Waterford, the grey of Kerry and the blue of Galway. A traveller in 1830 remarked wisely that "such peculiarities frequently point out the natural divisions of a country in more important matters than dress": they are an index to regional diversity. The distinctive features of particular districts are well illustrated in the case of "the Irish Flanders," the isolated tract in Co. Wexford comprising the baronies of Bargy and Forth; while nothing could reveal the separateness of some island communities better than the heaviest punishment meted out to offenders in Rathlin or Clear I.: it consisted of "banishment to Ireland."

000 Enough has been said to suggest that the traditions of the Irish countryside are of long standing, and that many strains in those traditions are not only of Celtic but of pre-Celtic antiquity. Before we consider some of the relics of the

164 very even and white, and seem to last well; even men of over sixty
[142] often have good incisors; but many suffer from toothache. Abscess
of the alveolus, unlike what is seen in Aran, is not at all common.

Skin.—Ulcers due to the friction of ropes and of the thick home-spun clothing when wet, eczema, "sea-boils," scabies, and acne, are frequently met with, as is anthrax or carbuncle; but, perhaps, the most common of all skin affections, especially among the younger members of the population, is tinea tonsurans. Alopecia areata, whether caused by the last-mentioned affection or not, seems to be common. Uterine troubles are not at all common. Venereal diseases are practically unknown.

164 *Accidents* arising out of the surroundings and occupation of the
752 people are, as might be expected, very numerous. These are burns, severe cuts from reaping hooks, injuries inflicted by domestic animals, and, above all, contusions and fractures due in most cases to falls from rocks and ponies.

● 181 4. *Psychology.*—For one who has had only a short experience of the people this very difficult and delicate point is exceedingly hard to deal justly with, but the following description, for the most part obtained from local sources, both on the islands and on the opposite part of the mainland, and to some small degree from personal observation, is believed to be accurate as far as it goes.

[609] To strangers, the people are not, at first, attractive, as their manner is shy and not unmarked by suspicion; but after this reserve is broken through they reveal themselves in a much more attractive light, and are kindly, courteous, and very communicative.

[517] Among themselves they are cheerful and social, given much to gossip and chaff, though their wit is not of a very sparkling character. They contrast strongly with the Aran Islanders in their taste for music and dancing, concertinas and melodions being in common use in several houses.

181 In their dealings with one another they are honest and fair, even
674 a petty theft being an extremely rare occurrence. As to their dealings
[609] with the people of the mainland, the usual hostile statements, common with all insular communities, are made by both sides with respect to each others honesty, but much reliance cannot be put in these vague assertions. Crime is almost unknown, and the administration of justice is seldom called into requisition, and then only for small quarrels among neighbours.

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Begging is practically unknown, and drunkenness, as a habit, does not exist, the sobriety being very noticeable on holidays, though occasional bouts of drinking are sometimes indulged in when a good take of fish has been made. They are very conscientious in their religious observances, and depend greatly on the advice and control of their clergy, with regard to temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Sexual irregularities are extremely rare, no case of illegitimacy having been recorded from the islands for years. [81] [735] [273] [793] [848]

As fishermen they are brave, hardy, and extremely venturesome; this applies especially to the men of Inishahark, who are reputed in Bofin to be the best and most daring boatmen on the west coast. [81]

Quarrels often occur, but a regular stand-up fight appears to be unknown, the men usually contenting themselves with abusive language, or at most a sudden blow or stone-throwing. A woman when angered may use very abusive language towards a man, as she would be practically safe from any fear of physical violence on his part, even when she was very provoking. [578] [181]

On the other hand, they are not without faults. In their ordinary life they are thriftless, and not too cleanly in many of their habits, and have but little regard for ordinary sanitary laws; their veracity, too, is not altogether unimpeachable, while the people of the mainland allege that they have a very strong aversion to the payment of debts, rent, and cess, for the last-named of which they owe over £1300. [81] [515] [651]

The habits and manners of the people of Shark are much the same as those described above. The people are noted for their loyalty to one another; they never tell any stranger anything about their local affairs. They are kindly and civil to visitors, always crowding down to assist them on landing, but are said to be capable of acts of ferocity when roused. [609]

5. *Folk-names.*—The following list of fifty-one surnames comprises all those now to be met with on the islands. Some of these names, however, are those of families not long established on the islands, while others, formerly common, as Gorham and Halligan, are now without representatives. [551]

The Gorbams are still, to some extent, connected with Inishbofin, as one of them is proprietor of the only shop there worth the name, and in addition holds a farm, but he lives on the mainland, and manages them by deputy, only occasionally visiting the place himself. It is possible that, owing to the heavy emigration, other surnames may also have disappeared. In the list of surnames given in the [444]

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895

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"*Constitutional*" diseases.—Phthisis and struma are stated to be comparatively rare. 164

Malignant disease is very common in the Mullet, especially in the electoral district of Binghamstown South, which includes all the southern part of the peninsula. The majority of these cases are said to fall into the hands of "cancer curers," who use arsenic paste.

Rheumatism is one of the most prevalent troubles, especially in the elderly and old.

"Gravel" is a common complaint all over the district, and a good many deaths from this cause are registered.

Dietetic diseases.—Digestive troubles are very common everywhere, but more especially in the inland parts where the dietary is less varied; "boxty," or potato-bread and the abuse of strong tea seem to be very largely responsible. 164 192

Along the coast, ento-parasites, due to the large proportion of fish in the dietary, are of very frequent occurrence.

Respiratory diseases.—Bronchitis is very prevalent in the winter and spring, and spasmodic asthma is stated to be not an uncommon affection. 164

Local affections are few and not very serious. Conjunctivitis is common, and much aggravated by the peat-smoke of the houses.

As regards dental troubles, the people are by no means free from these, though as a rule the teeth are even and white, and remain sound until late in life. [142]

"Female" troubles seem to be very common.

Veneral diseases are practically non-existent.

Skin.—Skin diseases are very prevalent. Among these the most common are—tinea tonsurans, eczema, sea boils, and scabies.

Accidental injuries.—Owing to the mode of life of the people and their environment, accidents frequently happen, especially fractures and contusions from falls, bites and other injuries from domestic animals, and burns. [752]

4. *Psychology*.—The difficulties of treating this part of the subject justly are, in the case of a stranger, very great, as his acquaintance with the people cannot be of sufficiently long standing to allow of the knowledge of more than the superficial part of their character, while, in the case of a resident, personal likes and antipathies, and local quarrels or friendships, largely influence his opinions. 181 ●

The following description, though to some extent derived from personal observation, is for the most part obtained from several local

● 181 sources, my informants being those who are brought into close contact with the everyday life of the people. So far as it goes it is believed to be accurate. No attempt has been made to do otherwise than describe the actual state of the case, and while the faults of the people are not extenuated, yet any circumstances which may explain these are given as far as possible, and their good qualities are believed to be stated without exaggeration.

181 To the casual visitor the people, on acquaintance, are decidedly
609 attractive; in the outlying parts of the district, it is true, they are at first rather suspicious of strangers, but after a short time are very obliging and communicative, ready to show anything of interest in their neighbourhood, and hospitable to the best of their power. The natives of both the islands at Inishkea, are very hospitable and kindly to strangers, of whom they are, however, rather distrustful, a visitor being welcomed into their houses, and entertained with the best they can give. With each other they seem in all parts of the district to be much given to chaff and joking of a more or less practical nature, and their sense of the ridiculous seems to be rather keen. In times of trouble or distress they are very kind, generous with what they have, and helpful to one another.

181 They are fond of music, dancing, and bright colours, and more
517 than one song-maker in their own tongue, the Irish, has been a native
53 of this district; amongst these was the celebrated Dick Barrett, several of whose productions have been collected and published. In common with most of the people of our rural districts, there do not seem to be many traces of artistic taste, and a native art is conspicuous by its absence. One or two instances of attempted decoration were observed in Inishkea, none on the mainland.

181 On the whole, though cases of dishonesty and sharp practice in
577 bargaining occur, they are honest in their dealings with one another. As is often the case in remote districts, the people of one locality are sometimes on strained relations with those of another; thus there exists a certain amount of jealousy and distrust between the natives of the two Inishkeas, while the people of the mainland do not readily amalgamate with those of either island.

181 As regards intelligence, they are extremely sharp and shrewd,
691 and seem rather fond of argumentation. There is but little crime, with the exception of illicit distillation and drunkenness, but the people are very litigious, going to law with each other about slight trespasses and similar matters. This tendency is not by any means of recent origin, but has been remarked on by several writers. Maxwell

BROWNE—*Ethnography of the Mullet, Inishkea, & Portacloy*. 615

mentions that at one time the people of Inishkea were much noted⁶⁹¹ for it, and that the fate of the two men, who some time in the last century ruined themselves in a lawsuit about a sheep, became proverbial, and litigants were warned to remember the fate of "Malley and Malone." C. O.¹ also refers to this peculiarity, which nowadays seems to be more characteristic of the mainland people than the islanders.

In the course of the cases arising from this tendency, many curious examples of ingenious cross-swearing occur. Intoxication is rather¹⁸¹ prevalent on fair days and holidays, and at weddings and other²⁷³ festive occasions, but at ordinary times there is not much of it among the country people. They appear to be conscientious in their⁷⁷¹ religious observances, and depend much on the guidance and advice of their clergy.

As will be judged from the extent and variety of their folk-lore,^[789] they have a great love for the supernatural and mystical.

As regards morals, though illegitimacy is by no means unknown,^[848] yet, when the size of the population is taken into account, it is so rare as to be very creditable to the moral tone of the people.²

A stand-up fight rarely occurs when men quarrel, there may be one or two blows struck, or stone-throwing may be indulged in, but⁵⁷⁸ disputes do not usually get beyond cursing and vituperation.

As parents they are affectionate, but careless and unequal in their treatment of their children, at one time over indulging them, and at^[855] another punishing severely for a slight fault.

With regard to industry, but little can be said in their favour,⁴⁶¹ though energetic by starts, during which they are capable of a great deal of work, accounts agree in stating that they dislike steady¹⁸¹ occupation, and are indolent. It should be remembered, however, that there has hitherto been but little inducement to them to cultivate steady industry. The women seem always to have plenty of work on hand, and to do it.

In this district, as in many others, the people are not very careful¹⁸¹ in their re-payment of debts, and shopkeepers do not now give credit to the same extent as formerly. As to rent and cess, to the payment⁴²⁶ of these, too, a strong aversion is often manifested.

Many of their habits are not over cleanly, though this is largely¹⁸¹ due to the wretched nature of their houses, and a strict regard for⁵¹⁵ truth is not a prominent part of their character.⁵⁷⁷

¹ "Sketches in Erris and Tyrawley."

² The total number of cases which occurred between the years 1884 and 1893 was 18.

PREFACE

The generous reception given to my *Irish Heritage*, published fifteen years ago, has encouraged me to go on collecting material on Irish folk life and to prepare this more comprehensive book on the subject. The earlier book was written, under difficult conditions, in the years 1939-41; it was an introductory study of an unexplored field, necessarily speculative and undocumented, and its main purpose was to arouse interest among Irish readers in the treasure-house of the past in which they live. It is hoped that *IRISH FOLK WAYS* will have a wider appeal. It is abundantly illustrated and fortified by references to a fairly full bibliography. Even so, parts of the text must be taken on trust, since some of the information was gathered from personal observation and conversations up and down Ireland. In the 'mountainy' corners of the country the past is ever-present, a ready topic of talk. I have checked the information where possible, for the inquirer must always be on guard against the countryman's facility of speech, his poetic licence and his fatal desire to please. [114]

There is a great fascination in exploring the living past, but one cannot employ the strict methodology of the historical or natural sciences. The historian is handicapped in studying peasant peoples, not only because they leave no documents but also because their sense of time and values are not those of fully literate folk. The geographer, interested primarily in variations in space, makes an easier approach; yet he will miss much unless he has a concern for origins and a sense of the past. Without knowledge of the past he will not fully observe the present: it is the emotional shock which prints in the memory the first sight of some tool or custom which has survived from an earlier culture-layer. For the historian, on the other hand, the fact that it was described in the eighteenth century is more significant than that it occurs, unrecorded, in the twentieth. [121]

40 • THE LAND AND THE SEA

duced trawlers and other types of fishing vessels and financed their purchase by islanders of the region, sent instructors to teach fishermen how to use the new boats and gear, set up curing and storage facilities in the islands, facilitated the shipping of fish to mainland markets, and attempted to regulate these markets so as to ensure maximum profits for the folk. These efforts failed for the most part in Inis Beag, and today the men fish from *curach*, much as did their grandfathers. The continuing effort of the government to improve fishing in the area is reflected in instruction in modern fishing techniques at a school in a nearby island, and the successful operation of a number of government financed trawlers and other fishing boats from there. 654
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The islanders consider fish from the sea, which are netted, more palatable and healthier to eat than those caught with lines and trawls, fresh water fish, and fish which have been cured or frozen. Fish taken on lines, because they bleed, and those enmeshed in trawls, because they suffocate, are thought to suffer in taste and nourishment, as do those which are treated artificially for sale; and fresh water fish are believed to be unhealthy to eat because they feed on refuse thrown into lakes and rivers rather than on natural foods. Some folk exclude even mackerel from their diet, since these fish "swim on the surface and eat everything dirty afloat." We already have noted that Inis Beag elders prefer seaweed to chemical fertilizers; the preference for netted fish which feed on natural foods to fresh water fish and mackerel which are contaminated is another example of a recurrent cultural theme—the positive valuation of natural objects and the negative valuation of artificial ones which come in contact with the human body. Other manifestations of this theme are the emphasis placed on folk medicines and the distrust of medicines prescribed by nurse and doctor, the belief that certain foods will assure health and combat specific illnesses, and the fear of piped water and canned foods. I often was told that I could improve my eyesight by giving up my glasses and rubbing dew on my eyelids, or by walking along the seashore to allow the wind and spray to penetrate my eyeballs. 262
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Over 30 varieties of fish are caught off Inis Beag, some with lines of varying length and number of hooks, others in the four types of nets, and a few with both lines and nets. Most important of the fish are: ling, cod, bream, gurnet, haddock, and autumn mackerel caught with lines; plaice, turbot, rock fish, and pollack both netted and taken on lines; and herring and spring mackerel captured in special nets. Trammel and drag nets are used in addition to herring and mackerel nets, and the most commonly used baits are gurnet, haddock, conger eel, bream, herring, and limpets. Fishing techniques vary considerably, as do the times of the year when particular kinds of fish are available, the localities that they frequent, and the baits which are most effective for each variety. Fishing crews form at different times of the year, often to fish in certain areas for specific fish. They are composed of both kin and close friends, and they tend to alter in membership from year to year as other activities intrude. 226
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Before I leave the subject of fishing, I wish to correct three commonly held misconceptions concerning Inis Beag men: they are all skilled seamen; because they spend much of their time at sea they are of necessity able swimmers; and 226
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- 226 many of them have lost their lives to the ocean. Islanders are well aware of the
 • 181 wide differences in rowing and fishing abilities among themselves, and the evalua-
 [44] tion of the skills of various men, past and present, is a much heard subject of
 [52] conversation. Also, many men choose not to fish because they are unable to develop
 [83] the requisite talents, are prone to severe seasickness, or are overly wary of the
 [52] dangers associated with fishing. It seems reasonable to assume that people who
 spend so much time on the water as a matter of safety will have learned to swim,
 [83] but I was unable to discover a single islander who possesses this skill. The reasons
 [52] put forward to account for the fact are several, but the most significant one never
 is broached—the puritanical reluctance to bare the body either publicly or pri-
 [59] vately at any age. Folk rationalizations are best summed up in the following quo-
 [62] tations: "Nothing will happen to the man who knows the sea," "Better for a man
 to drown at once and save himself the suffering," "The man who can't swim will
 take more care," and "When death is on a man, he can't be saved."
 226 A recurring motif in writings about Inis Beag is the threatening sea and
 165 heavy loss of life among fishermen, with its attendant psychological depression. In
 181 the past century, only four sea accidents have occurred in the island with the loss
 [82] of but 12 lives. The folk are extremely cautious out of respect for the elements,
 [62] handle their canoes with remarkable dexterity, and are excellent weather fore-
 [52] casters. The claim of one famous writer that each family has lost male members
 to the ocean reflects not only his psychological outlook, but the breadth and depth
 of kinship reckoning and the high degree of inbreeding—as an islander told me,
 "Every Inis Beag family is related, and the drowned man might have been eight-
 121 of-kin (third cousin) who died 60 years ago." The motif can be attributed to the
 projection of a tragic world view into the interpretation of the local culture by
 some authors, to the nativistic and primitivistic biases of other writers, and to a
 common sense conclusion reached by observers who have spent little time in the
 island and have failed to "count noses."

Diet

- 262 The diet of the islanders is simple, and only one large meal is eaten during
 264 the day. After the turf fire is rekindled from coals and water is boiled for tea, the
 252 family assembles for a breakfast which includes bread spread with butter and jam
 212 and tea mixed with ample amounts of milk and sugar. Dinner at noon and lunches
 [372] in the late afternoon and before retiring at night feature the same ingredients,
 although a boiled or fried egg usually is added to the dinner menu. The supper,
 eaten between seven and eight o'clock in the summer and an hour or two earlier
 during the winter, is the main meal when the family once again is united, and at
 this time boiled potatoes and vegetables, and meat if available, dominate the menu.
 [56] Again bread and tea are served, and a dessert, or "sweet"—such as custard, rhubarb,
 blancmange, or biscuits—may be added. Children of school age in a family eat
 together at noon and after school and may be joined by their father, but his duties
 often absent him from one or both of these meals, and he may carry bread and tea

16 · THE VILLAGE AND THE FAMILY It is not the formal system of local and national governments which exerts the most control over the behavior of Inis Beag islanders, but rather the church whose clerical representatives impose supernatural sanctions more potent than the threat of extermination. Indeed, because of the marked theocratic tendencies of the church in the Republic, and the all-powerful political role played by the clergy in Inis Beag, it is tempting to label the church a formal agency of social control. The island certainly comprises a primary group in the sociological sense, with its diminutive size and population, and the sanctions imposed by the folk on one another sometimes rival in effectiveness those of the parish priest and curate.

The widespread peasant trait of dependence together with hostility toward government is most pronounced in Inis Beag. Aid in a variety of forms constantly is sought and even expected as an obligation, or "right," of the government by the islanders (especially since nativism engendered by the Gaelic Revival has made Inis Beag "the darling of the Gaeltacht" to quote a Dublin scholar who is a bitter foe of the language movement), but they are either apathetic or antagonistic toward the local and central governments. When asked to account for their anti-government sentiment, the folk of Inis Beag cite most often the commonplace nepotism and corruption practiced by functionaries, the slight differences between the platforms of the major Irish parties—Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, the promises made by politicians which seldom are kept when they achieve office, the misapplication of programs once implemented, the inadequacy of government services, the burden of increasing taxation and inflation, and "foolish" government projects in Inis Beag, more often than not instituted without consulting the islanders.

Today, the folk seldom pay heed to election promises, but once their votes were commanded by politicians who put forth grandiose plans for the betterment of local conditions—such as lengthening the present jetty or constructing another to accommodate the steamer, and connecting the fresh water lake with the sea to form a sheltered harbor for trawlers—which never were realized. Popular subjects of conversation are the shortcomings of the postal, medical, transport, and other services, and the steady increase of taxes—on stout and tobacco in particular—and the price of imported turf. Among the government projects criticized by the islanders are seaweed drying structures and lime kilns which seldom or never have been used, road improvements made where they were not needed and not made where they were needed, and the new school and jetty whose sites were misplaced by civil servants who failed to seek local advice as to the vagaries of wind and tide. The school is in danger of becoming inundated with sand from the common land, and is near the strand where activities distract the attention of the pupils; and the pier is not located in the most protected position that the coastline affords. Anti-government feeling is but a part of a much broader anti-authority configuration, which extends to the clergy, to high status folk, and even to parent-child and sibling relationships within the family. It has been for many centuries a component of Irish basic personality structure and has had momentous repercussions on the course of Irish history.

The political apathy of the islanders is revealed in their voting behavior and their knowledge of political figures and issues. Election of councillors to the county council takes place every two years, and election of members to the Dail

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The role of the church in Irish history has been well documented, albeit often in a biased manner because of the prejudices of certain historians, but its role in shaping Irish culture and personality has been little examined. Irish social scientists either have been oblivious to it because of being Catholics themselves, or have been fearful of the political and religious consequences were they to pursue and publish the "truth;" foreign scientists, on the other hand, have shown little interest in Ireland, or have suppressed their data on religious influences in order to be able to return there to do further research.

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Whereas in developing countries anthropologists are being restricted increasingly by elitists sensitive to the primitive conditions in their nations which are being studied and publicized by scientists, in Ireland similar reactions of nativists, including those who are in the government, are compounded by those of the church. The resistance of the church to objective scrutiny in large measure explains the absence of ethnology—with its emphasis on such values as empiricism, naturalism, relativism, and pluralism—as a discipline in the national universities. Irish scholars have tended to stress economic and other monistic causes (especially climate, race, English oppression, the famine, and loss of the Irish tongue) in their analyses of culture and personality phenomena. I have talked with Irish scientists about religious forces as aspects of particular phenomena, and have been told that to acknowledge certain of these in print would be to commit job suicide. [123] When I have discussed with them my own conclusions about factors accounting for such conditions in Inis Beag as celibacy, late marriage, personality disorders, and emigration, and have cited religious causes as among the most significant ones, my listeners have agreed tacitly and changed the subject, or have remained silent. [122] Irish scientists visiting the United States, I might add, usually endorse my views but often ask not to be quoted abroad or in print. Religious causes are, in fact, so important and pervasive that one runs the risk of being declared a "religious determinist" if he deals objectively with his materials.

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The bishop and the parish priest in theory direct the actions of the curate in Inis Beag, but it is believed by the folk that their control over him in reality is only nominal, and that he often is able to make and carry out major decisions affecting the welfare of the islanders without consulting his superiors. His supposed freedom of action is reflected in the commonly voiced complaint that if word of his secular "excesses" were to reach the bishop, he would be reprimanded or replaced. However, some say that his policies are known and secretly approved of by his superiors. It is rumored that I was responsible for the replacement of a curate by complaining of his opposition to my research and certain of his excesses to mainlanders who had the "ear of the bishop."

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The folk are devoutly Catholic, despite the fact that they are extremely critical of their priests and retain and reinterpret pagan religious forms. They are proud of their strength of belief, with its attendant morality, and of the sanctity of "Inis Beag of the Saints," and they look to the curate for spiritual comfort, as well as political guidance in several spheres, and are uncomfortable in his absence. His presence, it is believed, provides supernatural protection for the island, while his absence invites possible anti-social behavior, and harm to the soul of one who

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dies suddenly and is deprived of Extreme Unction at his deathbed. The compensatory rite performed later for the deceased who has been interred while the curate was away is thought to be less efficacious in shortening the stay of the soul in Purgatory.

In the past, the amount of social control exerted by clerics has varied; a few have been concerned mostly with fulfilling their religious duties, but the greater number have attempted in a variety of ways to regulate the lives of the islanders—to restrict such activities as visiting, gossiping, courting, dancing, and drinking spirits. The curates have tried, in general, to maintain the indigenous culture, especially the Gaelic tongue, and to discourage change, halt emigration, maintain the moral standards of the folk, and limit anti-social behavior. I have heard both islanders and curates defend the *status quo* in Inis Beag, including its poverty, by asserting that, "This life is of no importance, and its suffering must be borne for the glory of Heaven to come." In the absence of local police, curates sometimes have performed the functions of *gardai*, and since 1960 have combatted a growing rash of juvenile delinquency, which has included, among other misdeeds, the destruction of property outside of homes in which parties are held, petty theft, and molestation of girls from the mainland who visit during the summer.

The techniques of social control utilized by curates are many and mostly negative; they include weekly sermons, lectures to students in the school, talks with individuals who need guidance or reprimand, the use of informers (a word so detested in Ireland that I have substituted respondent for informant in this book) and confessions, the allocation of indulgences, and, in extreme cases, the refusal of sacraments and the placing of curses. It is difficult to overestimate the degree of fear of the clergy and anti-clericalism which have been inculcated among the folk by the more immoderate measures employed by priests during the last century. Sermons deal both with spiritual messages based on the scriptures and church pronouncements, and with instruction and censure directed toward past or anticipated actions of the islanders in concert or of particular persons. Talks with individuals may take place in their or the curate's home, and often result from information received by the priest from informers or the confessional. The informers, it is said, are usually the housekeeper of the curate and her family, and children who are intimidated by the priest to reveal talk and behavior of their parents and others; however, certain folk are known to bear tales to the clergy and are shunned for this reason. Well aware of the power that the confessional gives the priest over their lives, islanders are outspoken in its condemnation, and many will not confess particular sins, especially those of a sexual nature, to a curate known to assign severe penances and to carry matters beyond the confessional.

The awarding of indulgences represents a positive social control method and has been used frequently, I was told, to obtain needed monetary contributions and services from the folk. Although the priest cannot excommunicate a recalcitrant parishioner, he can achieve the same objective by forbidding confession and absolution and the other sacraments to him, and the islanders report its threat and use as a sanction on several occasions in the past. Even more feared is the "priest's curse," which in Co. Clare "... can bring ruin upon a prosperous house; can turn an unbeliever's head upon his shoulders; strike blindness ..." (Arensberg 1937:28).

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conditions appraised. The community regulates its internal affairs through the *cuaird* as well. It is here public opinion is formulated. There is nothing formal about the decisions made upon the incidents arising from day to day. The local community has no implement with which to enforce its will. But it has the power of gossip and boycott (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:190-191).

Decisions of this sort and their sanctions in Inis Beag rest largely in the hands of government officials and the priest, headmaster, and king.

Many folk long have believed that the island needs a council with representatives from each of the four villages serving on it, to foster cooperation and to formulate policies which bear on the welfare of all. After independence in 1922, a move was made to form such a council, but the civil war interrupted the process; since that time, according to the islanders, the opposition of curates and king, none of whom have wanted their vested interests threatened, has succeeded in blocking the formation of such a body. Other forces at work, however, are the lassitude and ambivalence toward authority of the people, and their dislike and jealousy of one another. They complain of the lack of leadership, or of the "wrong" kind of leadership, as in the case of the priest and king; but they are unable or unwilling to expend the energy needed to get themselves organized and "pull together" for the common good. Often those who advocate the formation of a council will, in the next breath, express their dislike or distrust of its potential members, or a desire to remain independent of its collective will should it run contrary to their own. A vacationing emigrant who said, "We have no sense of civic pride and responsibility but think only of ourselves," assessed the situation accurately.

Among the traits attributed to Inis Beag folk by nativists and primitivists are self-reliance, independence, and individualism. But the self-reliance of the islanders has become undermined increasingly since 1891 by a benevolent government; their independence is severely curtailed by restrictions imposed on them by curate, headmaster, king, and their fellows; and their individualism is a figment of literary imagination disguising a strict conformism. Inis Beag as much as any community is characterized by gossip, ridicule, and opprobrium, which gain their effectiveness as social control mechanisms from the deep concern of the folk with "saving face," and which serve to limit freedom of action and behavioral idiosyncrasy. When asked to rank the major deficiencies of island life, the people almost without exception place the prevalence of malicious gossiping, along with poverty and the intrusion of the clergy into secular affairs, at the head of their list.

No matter how much the islanders detest gossiping when they are its victims, they nevertheless welcome every opportunity to engage in it. News of an event passes quickly by word of mouth from Low to Terrace Villages, and variations in the description of the event are usually numerous due to the distortions of rumor. In order to circumvent gossip, parties are organized at the last moment and invitations issued by small boys moving quietly from door to door in the night; persons will leave the island—sometimes to emigrate, visit the hospital with a serious illness, or enter an order—without previous announcement, running from their homes to the strand to board the last canoes for the steamer; and mail is posted just prior to the arrival of the steamer and picked up immediately after it

518 women. They arise largely out of personality clashes and are expressed in gossip
[62] and withdrawal. As in Aughnaboy, none of the disputes between men appear to
be based on competition for women, although jealousy of a rival and anger at
being rejected have spurred a few disputes involving particular women and couples.

518 One of the important causes of personality conflict in the island is the dogmatism
626 of the folk. They are quick to form opinions, often on the basis of inadequate
information, and cling tenaciously to them once they are voiced publicly. Thus, a
simple difference of views concerning a topic between two persons can grow into

[328] a serious altercation lasting a lifetime—and beyond. One facet of this dogmatism is
the local belief that the character of a person can be assessed accurately on first

[123] meeting him. I became the victim of a dispute of sorts by telling a man that my
"first impressions" of a new acquaintance often are wrong, and that I prefer to
interact for some time with the individual before passing judgment on him; this
admittance branded me as deficient in character and one to be "withdrawn" from,
and I never made it again.

121 I have mentioned that dependence on the guided interview can prevent an
518 observer from gaining insight into disputes among Irish and Inis Beag peasants;
• 181 this is so because dysfunctional social relations are kept carefully hidden from out-
siders—the conscious models concerning disputes not only are incorporated into
the self-image of the islanders but are urged on strangers. The concern for kin,
acquaintances, and particular groups manifested in speech and behavior, which at
times can be most sentimental, cannot be taken at face value. The emigrating rela-
tive whose departure provokes tears on the strand may be forgotten quickly, and
his absence even heralded, in the privacy of the home, and the mourners at a
graveside may include many who display indifference when thought to be un-
observed while kneeling in the rear ranks. This state of affairs gives rise to a
brief consideration of the problems associated with procuring reliable data.

114 Honor Tracy, in the first chapter (aptly entitled "Forebodings") of her
book, *Mind You I've Said Nothing*, humorously predicts the various reactions that
her volume will stimulate in Irish readers. She concludes with the following
statement about the difficulties surrounding fact-finding in Ireland:

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181 This question of fact was another of the spectres hovering in my path. In every
book there should be a fact here and there or the writer is charged with aimless
frivolity. But facts in Ireland are very peculiar things. They are rarely allowed
to spoil the sweep and flow of conversation: the crabbing effect they have on
good talk is eliminated almost entirely. I do not believe myself that the Irishman
conveniently ignores their existence, as sometimes is said, so much as that he is
blithely unaware of it. He soars above their uninviting surfaces on the wing of
his fancy. Who then would answer my questions truthfully, who would supply
me with that modicum of sober and accurate information required to give my
book a serious air? No one, as far as I knew. And if facts are elusive and
shadowy things in Ireland, opinions are more so. An Irishman... will say not
what he thinks but what he believes you would like him to think; he is a man
of honeyed words, anxious to flatter and soothe, cajole and caress... [He does
not] reveal his own true thoughts if, to be sure, he has any. He would be in
dread lest you quoted him and the story went around and he got the name of
a bold outspoken fellow, which might be bad for business. And then again so
many Irishmen find an innocent glee in misleading and deceiving for its own sake.

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Obfuscation is the rule, and while it may seem a little foolish at times, there is no doubt that it makes for a great deal of fun. It cultivates too a sharpness of ear, a feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and a wary alertness that would be worth its weight in gold should one ever be lost in a jungle (Tracy 1953:20-21).

The quotation in some measure applies to interviewing in Inis Beag, where my wife and I took great pains to disentangle real from ideal culture by substantiating interview data with observation wherever possible.

The existence of the conditions depicted by Tracy, as well as the numerous cultural practices shrouded in secrecy, led us to return to the island several times after 1960 before I attempted this book, to emphasize various modes of participant observation, to devise *ad hoc* research methods of an unorthodox nature, to "hone" our orthodox tools and employ cross-checking techniques at every stage of our project, and to cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which so distinguishes ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as a systematic epistemology. The use by many folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm," which often is the product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms; beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy of others. Blarney can serve very effectively to shield genuine thoughts and feelings and thus defend the ego. Irish folklore and literature also reflect this tradition, and it is probably expressed most formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* (At least one Irish folklorist has collected "Joycean" utterances from peasants.).

Prestige Status

Inis Beag lacks a class system, and the status symbols which affect human relationships are few. That land and capital—known collectively as "money," "wealth," or "riches"—are the major symbols is revealed in the frequently heard phrase, "If you have money and your health, you're all right." (Health alone is mentioned by those of lesser means.). The men of highest prestige are the king and the 13 who own 24 or more acres of land. But they and their families do not interact more with one another than with others, for, as we have noted, the web of kinship rather than the possession of status attributes largely determines who will interact with whom and in what manner. Nor is their style of life different from that of other islanders, since material possessions and social etiquette are relatively unimportant in the status system. Although the king is a "man of few gardens," his capital, charismatic personality, and "connections" with priests, politicians, and civil servants earn him his high position in the status hierarchy. The prestige which comes with land ownership is based more on the fact of its possession than on the potential wealth that it represents. Men with large holdings can, of course, build more fields and on the increased acreage raise more cattle and sheep and grow more surplus crops for sale, but few take advantage of this oppor-

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especially outside of Ireland. Four islanders have entered orders—two priests and two nuns—and have brought their families not only prestige but an aura of sanctity; it is believed by the folk that God bestows grace on his earthly representatives and on their kin as well. Even the king is thought to receive some measure of supernatural support for the period of time that he spent during his youth, as is rumored, as a servant at Maynooth Seminary.

The folk rank one another according to their ability to row the *curach*, fish, farm, knit, and perform other economic tasks, although such talents do not bring the prestige that they once did. I often have heard individuals chaffed publicly, sometimes even to their faces, for possessing less than average skills, and many persons have told me privately that they admire or envy the skills of others and wish that they themselves were more adept. A man who owns land in the quarter of another village told me that he works painstakingly in setting a garden there, since his efforts will be appraised by the alien villagers and pitilessly condemned if found wanting. Women gain most of their prestige through performing well the tasks ascribed to them by the division of labor. The economic skills of individuals who lived in the past are lauded more than those of contemporary islanders, reflecting the shift of emphasis in the prestige system; this is far more the case with singing, dancing, and storytelling, as well as with the display of strength and courage. Institutionalized storytelling had disappeared from Inis Beag before 1960, although raconteurs of note still hold forth in the pubs and at small social gatherings. These persons, and the several who excel at singing and dancing, are held in high repute. Probably the best liked of the islanders is a man of 72 years who is admired for his wit, charm, friendliness, and agile step dancing. When drinking in the pubs, he enjoys telling anecdotes about his past experiences, singing and dancing, expressing a simulated sadness at his bachelor estate, and poking sly fun at the behavior of certain folk. Although he is landless and thought to be overly lazy, he is ranked high in the prestige hierarchy because of his esthetic talents and occasional *joie de vivre*. His recluse brother of opposite temperament remarked sadly, "Even the stones of the island know him, but no one knows me." Another landless man, now deceased, who was about the same age, enjoyed high status because he was a traditional storyteller, was noted as a young man for his exceptional strength and athletic and rowing prowess, had spent a decade in the United States, and by reading had educated himself well above the level of most of the folk.

Stories abound concerning once famous men of strength and courageous deeds in Inis Beag and the surrounding region. These anecdotes are recounted more during the summer months than the winter ones, when tourists are within earshot and can be suitably impressed. Acts of courage performed by folk in the past mostly deal with mishaps which occurred to crews while fishing or traveling to and from nearby islands or the mainland. The feats of strength performed by former athletes—such as putting the shot, long jumping, and "throwing the half-hundred"—are well within the realm of possibility, but other feats usually are grossly exaggerated. Examples of the latter are the man who, grasping the base of the front leg of a chair in which sat a person weighing 11 stones (154 pounds), lifted it with one hand, also the man who raised over his head "with ease" a struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight.

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526 struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight. A famous writer
181 claimed that he introduced into Inis Beag a feat of agility that he had learned in
[77] France, which consists of holding a stick in both hands at the knees and jumping
back and forth across it without losing grip; the islanders attest that this "trick"
was known locally for at least a century, and one man boasted that his father was
123 able to leap back and forth a dozen times in quick succession. My rapport with
the men was enhanced by the fact that I had been a weight thrower and lifter
and used to entertain them by putting a granite boulder, throwing a discus that
I had brought with me, and performing repetition presses with a barrel of stout.
However, the one time that I was persuaded to compete for Inis Beag against Inis
Thiar in putting the shot (a flat-bottomed store weight of 14 pounds), I fouled
with my foot all three times and thus suffered ignominious defeat. The curate who
officiated at the event appeared pleased, but the islanders who had placed wagers
on me were of opposite disposition.

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feel that sexual intercourse is debilitating, and they will desist from it the night before they are to perform tasks which will require the expenditure of great energy. Women are approached sexually neither during menstruation nor for at least six months after childbirth, for they are considered "dangerous" to the male at these times. Returned Yanks have been denounced from the pulpit for describing American sexual mores to local youths, and such "pornographic" magazines as *Time* and *Life*, mailed home by relatives from abroad, have aroused curates to spirited sermon and instruction. 833 [841] [846] [793]

Male masturbation seems to be common in Inis Beag (sometimes called the major "escape valve" for frustration in Ireland), but premarital coitus is unknown and marital copulation is limited as to foreplay and the manner of consummation. Elders proudly insist that premarital sexual activities of any sort do not occur in the island, but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on "petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the bolder of them kiss and handle outside of their clothing. Inis Beag girls, it is held by their lovers, do not confess these sins because they fail to experience pleasure from the contact; the male perpetrators also shun the confessional because of their fear of the curate. Absolute privacy at night is sought by married couples when they copulate, and foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the lower body of the woman, especially her buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated by the husband, and the wife is usually totally passive. Only the male superior position is employed, and intercourse takes place with underclothes not fully removed; orgasm for the man is achieved quickly, after which he falls asleep almost immediately. Whenever I talked with males of sexual practices other than those just described, my remarks were met with disbelief, or I was accused of "coddling" my listeners. 836 [783] 833 [124]

Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies, such as nudity and physiological evacuation, are considered sexual in Inis Beag. We have noted elsewhere the fear of nudity—which precludes washing the body and bathing in the sea—and the secrecy surrounding the acts of urination and defecation and the use of human manure as fertilizer and cow dung as fuel. The sexual symbolism of nudity not only has resulted in the drowning of seamen who might have saved themselves had they been able to swim, but in the death of men who were unwilling to face the nurse when ill, because it might mean baring their bodies to her, and thus were beyond help when finally treated. An island nurse confided to me that she was physically assaulted by the mother of a young man for diagnosing his illness in the mother's absence and bathing his chest as the woman entered his bedroom. Even the nudity of household pets can arouse anxiety, especially when they are sexually aroused during time of heat. In some cottages, dogs are whipped for licking their genitals and soon learn to indulge in this behavior outside when unobserved. 831 291 614 [758] [164] [824]

Hypochondria and depression in Inis Beag are inextricably linked, in that the former composes part of the syndrome of the latter; and just as sexual puritanism is undergirded by masochism, so are these two traits. Little more need be said about the causes of depression among the folk, other than to bring together factors which have been discussed earlier: the extent to which their lives are circumscribed by the will of the priest and other figures of authority; their poverty 15 182 181 • 152 [562]

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181 and the never ending toil needed to maintain present subsistence standards; the
152 spying and malicious gossiping of their fellows and the ubiquity of jealousy and
[562] envy; the isolation of the island, particularly during winter months; numbing
boredom and the dearth of social activities; for women, the lack of freedom and
of attention and affection from their spouses, as well as the necessity of enduring
828 sexual relations; and, as stated above, hypochondria. Much has been written about
829 isolation and its depressive effects on the islanders, and the folk themselves con-
stantly complain of being shut off from the world and prey to wind, rain, fog, and
[104] raging sea. But isolation need not lead inevitably to depression, for my wife and
I conducted research in another island of Ireland—far distant from and even more
inaccessible than Inis Beag—where the inhabitants do not feel isolated and are
not depressed.

121 I have expanded the clinical usage of the term hypochondria to include
fears of the spirit as well as fears of the body, for ill health can as often be induced
by supernatural forces, and death—whether by disease, injury, or aging—is the
164 ultimate fear with its threat of eternal damnation. Colds, influenza, dyspepsia,
migraine headaches, teeth decay, the crippling effects of joint and muscle ailments,
[145] hypermetrophy, and mental illness are paramount among health concerns. "Flu"
epidemics are frequent in the island and are a chief cause of death among people
[687] who have become weakened by old age. As the folk advance in years, they come to
spend more time in bed and by the turf fire and venture out less during the winter
[751] and when it rains. Drafts are avoided whenever possible, and clothes dampened by
seas which wash the canoes or by rain are changed for dry ones at the first oppor-
tunity. Colds, flu, indigestion, and headaches more than any other afflictions send
[757] the islanders to the nurse for drugs and to their own folk remedies for relief.
[753] Dyspepsia is known as "wind" and is thought to result from diet, but the nurses
say that most cases of indigestion are the result of tension—"nervous stomach."
Nine cases of migraine were reported in Inis Beag during 1959, but many other
islanders, most of whom are women, suffer from "nervous headache" which can
[123] approach migraine in intensity of pain. Neither my wife nor I were ill during the
[767] winter of 1959 and 1960, even though we were abroad in all sorts of inclement
weather against the advice of our neighbors; when we began picking wild garlic
to season our food, it was reasoned that the condiment afforded us protection
against the flu, which reached almost epidemic proportions that year, and as a
result this folk medicine was used more widely and consistently than usual.

[114] Nativists and primitivists praise the health and hardiness of the folk and
boast of the absence of rheumatism and allied infirmities among them and the
sharpness of their sight. But, just as most adults past 30 years of age suffer from
decay and loss of teeth, they also suffer from muscle and joint ailments, caused by
the "damp and cold," and from far-sightedness. It is not known how many folk
wear glasses in the privacy of their homes, but only two persons, both men, wear
them publicly—and self-consciously when they do. Most glasses are not prescrip-
tion made but are purchased in mainland shops after many pairs displayed on the
counters have been tested, and often a single pair will serve the needs of all the
[829] elders of a household. The islanders among themselves constantly complain of these
[668] and other ailments, although some will praise the health and hardiness of the local

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Ireland ER1

[For information pertaining to the historical background of Irish national character and personality development, the relation to sexual repression and theological dogma, see 17: Messenger, ER6 Rural Irish, category 116, pp. 20-27.]

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JOHN C. MESSENGER *

SEX AND REPRESSION IN AN IRISH FOLK COMMUNITY



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In this chapter I will discuss sexual repression—its manifestations in behavior and beliefs, its causes, its inculcation, and its broader historical and cultural implications—in a small island community of the Gaeltacht that I will call Inis Beag.¹ My wife and I conducted ethnographic research there for nineteen months, between 1958 and 1966, which included a one-year stay and eight other visits of from one to seven weeks—at Christmas or during the summer. Ours is the only holistic ethnographic study of this community, although archeologists, linguists, philologists, folklorists, geographers, anthropometrists, and other scientists have undertaken research there for over a century. We collected a large body of culture and personality data on three other Irish islands for the purposes of making comparisons and testing hypotheses concerning culture and personality concomitants of island living. Inis Beag is ideally suited to ethnographic and folklore research in that its population possesses a tradition which is less acculturated than that of any other local Irish group.

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According to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960: 1-2), the islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect. The community has maintained its stability for at least 200 years; there is a strong bond between the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with

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* A grant from the Indiana University Ford International Program enabled me to write this chapter.

¹ For other reports on Inis Beag, consult Messenger 1962, 1968, and 1969.

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

the major source of their livelihood; production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a simple technology, using the digging stick, spade, and scythe as primary implements; the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to their laws; the people have long been exposed to urban influences and have borrowed cultural forms from other rural areas on the mainland, integrating them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under English rule for centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of dependence on—yet hostility toward—government which continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those found in most other peasant communities are low death and illiteracy rates and bilateral, rather than unilineal, descent (although inheritance is patrilineal).

Inis Beag culture also characterizes people of nearby islands, and the traditions of the several together might be regarded as forming a subculture of the total Irish system. Many island customs are shared with rural peasants on the mainland (where numerous regional subcultures exist), and some are part of a broader European matrix. The island has experienced considerable cultural change since the establishment of the Congested Districts Board (forerunner of the Gaeltacht) in 1891 and the growth of tourism in this century. But conditions there still approximate those which must have prevailed two generations ago, and earlier, throughout this region of peasant Ireland.

Inis Beag has a population of approximately 350 persons living in seventy-one "cottages" distributed among four settlements, called "villages." Bordering a "strand" and a large tract of common land on the northeastern side of the island are a series of limestone terraces, separated by water-bearing shales and faced by small cliffs, on which the villages are situated. Most of the arable land is found on this side, where the shales have been broken down by weathering and alien soils deposited by wind and by ice of the Weichsel glacier. Over many generations, the islanders have deepened these soils and created new soils on rock surfaces by adding seaweed, sand, and human manure. On the southwestern side of Inis Beag, known as the "back of the island," limestone pavements slope rather evenly, almost as the gentle dip of the strata, from the crest of the highest terrace to the sea a mile away. The bared surfaces are intersected in all directions by crevices.

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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114 tent; they have depended on a limited sample of respondents; and most
538 of their queries have been guided by Sean O Suilleabhain's *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, which does not contain numerous categories of significance to anthropologists.

12 My wife and I devoted most of our research to documenting the contemporary culture of Inis Beag: its economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also described formal and informal education and the personality traits formed by it, reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many types and probing the memories of aged island respondents, and recorded cultural change in process over an eight-year period. The standard ethnographic research techniques that we employed include guided and open-ended interviews, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, cross-checking, photography, and phonography. The sample for much of our data was the total universe of 350 inhabitants.

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It is extremely difficult to obtain information in Inis Beag about such matters as amounts and sources of income, disputes, pagan religious retentions and reinterpretations, and sex. This brief list might be increased by at least threefold and gives rise to a consideration of the problems associated with obtaining reliable data from the Irish in general and the islanders in particular. Honor Tracy, in the first chapter (aptly entitled "Forebodings") of her book, *Mind You I've Said Nothing*, humorously presents one of the shortest, yet most discerning analyses of Irish national character yet written by a novelist and predicts the various reactions that her volume will evoke in Irish readers.⁴ She concludes with the following remarks about the difficulties surrounding fact finding in Ireland:

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This question of fact was another of the spectres hovering in my path. In every book there should be a fact here and there or the writer is charged with aimless frivolity. But facts in Ireland are very peculiar things. They are rarely allowed to spoil the sweep and flow of conversation: the crabbing

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⁴ These reactions appear to be institutionalized, as my writings and conversational remarks have also evoked them. Two additional responses that I have encountered are: my conclusions are invalidated because I failed to consult certain "source materials" written in Gaelic, and my inferior writing style precludes serious consideration of my findings. I take pains to explain, usually in vain, the many methods of fieldwork utilized by ethnographers to Irish persons who are critical of my data and who invariably use the phrase, "You can't trust what an Irishman tells you." On a rare occasion, one listener to my lengthy explanation said, "Ah, you're cuter than we are"—a compliment indeed!

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effect they have on good talk is eliminated almost entirely. I do not believe myself that the Irishman conveniently ignores their existence, as sometimes is said, so much as that he is blithely unaware of it. He soars above their uninviting surfaces on the wing of his fancy. Who then would answer my questions truthfully, who would supply me with that modicum of sober and accurate information required to give my book a serious air? No one, as far as I know. And if facts are elusive and shadowy things in Ireland, opinions are more so. An Irishman, sober, will say not what he thinks but what he believes you would like him to think; he is a man of honeyed words, anxious to flatter and soothe, cajole and caress. When he has taken a jar or two . . . he will say whatever he judges will give the greatest offence. In neither case does he reveal his own true thoughts if, to be sure, he has any. He would be in dread lest you quoted him and the story went round and he got the name of a bold outspoken fellow, which might be bad for business. And then again so many Irishmen find an innocent glee in misleading and deceiving for its own sake. Obfuscation is the rule, and while it may seem a little foolish at times, there is no doubt that it makes for a great deal of fun. It cultivates too a sharpness of ear, a feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and a wary alertness that would be worth its weight in gold should one ever be lost in a jungle (Tracy 1953: 20-21).

I will not concern myself with the various cultural and psychological causes accounting for this state of affairs, which would require an essay equal in length to this one. Suffice it to say, the quotation in considerable measure applies to interviewing in Inis Beag, where my wife and I took great pains to disentangle real from ideal culture by substantiating interview data with observation, wherever possible. The existence of the conditions depicted by Tracy, as well as the numerous cultural practices shrouded in secrecy, led us to return to the island several times after 1960 before attempting an ethnography, to emphasize various modes of participant observation in order to gain added rapport, to devise ad hoc research methods of an unorthodox nature,³ to "hone" our orthodox tools and employ cross-checking techniques at every stage of our research, and to

³ Departures from methodological orthodoxy were our use, as projective devices, of literary works and a ballad that I composed. Islanders read at our request books about Inis Beag, and we recorded and analyzed their responses. The ballad that I wrote, now embedded in the local verbal art tradition, is based on a shipwreck and rescue that we witnessed, and a series of fascinating events which ensued during the following months. The manner of its composition, the alteration of it by Inis Beag singers after it was written, and the circumstances surrounding its public presentation by various balladiers before differing audiences gave us invaluable ethnographic insights.

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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12 cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which characterize ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as an epistemology.

• 181 The use by the folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and
195 "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition
[178] of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm,"
which often is a product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms;
beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy
of others. Blarney can very effectively serve to shield genuine thoughts
[538] and feelings and thus protect the ego. Irish folklore and literature also
reflect this tradition of verbal skill, and it is probably expressed most
formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. (At least one
folklorist has collected "Joycean utterances" from Irish peasants.)

123 Most of our information came from observation and unguided
interviews. It proved impossible to take field notes openly, except when
collecting innocuous data—such as the number of livestock owned by
each householder—from a few particular persons. Thus, we were forced
to limit our visits to less than two hours, after which we immediately
[562] transcribed what our combined memories could resuscitate. Despite fre-
quent explanations of our presence in Inis Beag, which were candid and
truthful, it was thought by the islanders that I was interested only in
archeological sites and oral literature, and that my wife was not a trained
and experienced co-worker; this, obviously, reflects their previous ex-
periences with scientists and their conception of the position of women
in society. Their inability to evaluate adequately our intentions proved
[609] to be a research boon. For once "accepted" (a relative term, since no
outsider is ever accepted) after many months in the island, we were
allowed to listen to and participate in conversations and activities from
which we would otherwise have been excluded.

123 Our data on sex came from my involvement as a participant-
*831 observer in personal and often intimate conversations with men and my
wife's counseling of women who were bothered by such matters as ex-
plaining and coping with menstruation, menopause, mental illness, the
sexual curiosity of their children, and "excessive" sexual demands of
their spouses. Our sexual knowledge and sympathy coupled with their
needs and inquisitiveness gave rise to a "counselor-client" relationship
between many of the folk and ourselves. They came to speak freely, albeit
indirectly at times, with each of us about this sphere of behavior which
arouses so much anxiety and fear. I must mention that the relationship

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regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub. Both step- and set-dancing are practiced in Inis Beag, although the former type is dying out. This rigid-body dancing, from which sex is removed by shifting attention below the hips, appears to have originated in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. The set patterns keep partners separated most of the time; but, even so, some girls refuse to dance, because it involves touching a boy. Inis Beag men, while watching a woman step-dance, stare fixedly at her feet, and they take pains to appear indifferent when crowding at a party necessitates holding women on their laps and rubbing against them when moving from room to room. But they are extremely sensitive, nevertheless, to the entire body of the dancer and to these casual contacts, as are the women. Their covert emotional reactions (which become overt as much drink is taken) are a form of catharsis.

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SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS HISTORICAL CAUSES

Analysts of Irish character have put forth various hypotheses to account for sexual repression, ranging from the sophisticated to the absurd. The former can be classified under three rubrics: historical (e.g., the influence of ascetic monasticism, Augustinianism, and Jansenism), sociocultural (e.g., the Oedipus complex in the Irish family and male solidarity), and psychological (e.g., masochism). Beyond serious scientific consideration are such hypotheses as the loss of the Irish tongue, lack of a Catholic aristocracy, fear of Protestant libertinism, and the ever-appealed-to factors of race, climate, and the famine. In the following paragraphs, I will quote excerpts from Irish authors and from critical observers of the Irish scene, including social scientists, rather than dissect their views myself.

Paul Blanshard, in his polemical but insightful (and, in my estimation, often understated) work, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, says that "whatever the explanation, the total sexual expression of the Irish people is much less than it is in other countries, and that the Catholic crusade against normal sexual life has actually created a nation of men and women who try to drown their fundamental instincts." In attempting to account for sexual repression on such a scale, he writes:

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Ireland was . . . one of the world's most ascetic countries, and the monastic ideal has undoubtedly left a deep mark on the Irish mind. Although Irish priests were permitted to have wives as late as the eighth century, sexual renunciation came to be identified with virtue and distinction in the community, and thousands of the best men and women lived apart from each other. Kevin Devlin in his *Christus Rex* article on "Single and Selfish" . . . says of the ancient Irish that "when they 'fell in love with Christianity' . . . they took to the ideal of virginity with a Pauline enthusiasm unknown elsewhere. St. Patrick himself noted this with an inflection of surprise in the *Confessions* . . ." (Blanshard 1954: 160-161).

Several Irish scholars since 1955 have expressed the opinion in personal conversations that the rapidity of Irish conversion to monasticism in the early medieval period can be attributed, in large measure, to masochism.

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This ancient character trait is most evident in the projective system of early Irish verbal art, if one discounts the possibility of widespread distortion through the actions of Celtic defense mechanisms and later revisionists.

In a recent book, the impact of Augustinianism at this time and in the centuries to come is examined by Fr. Alexander Humphreys. He says in *New Dubliners*:

The specific doctrinal tradition to which Ireland and the Irish countryman in particular has fallen heir is the Augustinian. . . . [It] lays relatively greater emphasis on the weakness and evil to which human nature is prone as the result of original sin. By the same token, it attributes relatively less efficacy to natural knowledge and human action and relatively more validity to God's revelation and more power to the action of God's grace. . . . [The] Irish countryman has acquired a more than average distrust of native human reason. As a Catholic he cannot and does not deny the validity of rational thought, but he tends to be quite suspicious of the pride of the mind and so wary of ultimate rationalism that he shies away from reasoned discussions of high truths. . . . The tradition he inherits tends toward a certain historical and theological positivism in regard to the major truths and values of life, and, together with other historical factors, has led him to an intensified reliance upon the teaching power of the Church as voiced by the clergy. At the same time, while appreciating the need for positive good works, he is inclined to place relatively greater emphasis on those which are directly concerned with obtaining grace and relatively lesser store by simple ethical behaviour. And finally, although he is certain that man's bodily nature with its emotions is at root good, he is rather more suspicious of it and deals with it somewhat more severely. As a result he inclines to a jaundiced view of sex and a generally ascetic outlook which

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places a high premium upon continence, penance and, in most spheres of life, on abstemiousness (Humphreys 1966: 25-26).

Humphreys further points out that "the effects of the religious tradition of the Irish, let alone of the countryman, upon the social behavior and attitudes of the people has never been systematically studied from a sociological point of view." He notes that the classic study, *Family and Community in Ireland*, by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, based on research done over thirty years ago, "leaves the matter virtually untouched," and "attributes the countryman's attitude towards sex almost exclusively to the structure of life in the rural community."

Granted the profound influence social structure has on such a basic matter, a purely structural-functional analysis is hard put to explain adequately the quite ascetic sexual morality of the Irish countryside. . . . [An] attitude similar to that of the countryman is far from uncommon in a city such as Dublin—and among New Dubliners and Old Dubliners to boot—whose social structure differs so radically from that of the countryside. Structural-functional explanations of attitudes do hold up to a point. But world-views and their ethical consequences also have their special effect (Humphreys 1966: 24-27).

Monasticism and Augustinianism certainly "set the stage" for later Jansenism, although all three probably are connected with basic Irish culture and personality traits of long standing.

Jansenism is succinctly placed in its historical context in Ireland by Joe McCarthy.

Like most everything in Ireland, the severe strictness of the old-time Catholic clergymen was rooted in historical events of the country's past. During the dark era of the anti-Catholic Penal Laws in the 18th Century, young Irishmen had to study for the priesthood on the Continent. In the early 1790's, the British Government became alarmed by the rise of Theobald Wolfe Tone's Irish Protestant revolutionary movement and made hurried bids of appeasement to Irish Catholics in an effort to win their loyalty. One of these conciliatory moves was the establishment of the Catholic theological seminary at Maynooth in 1795. Perhaps not entirely by accident, the faculty of the new college was staffed by refugees from the French Revolution, promonarchy theologians who hated Tone's republican ideas. Most of these theologians had been influenced by Jansenism—the rigid and gloomy doctrine, denounced as Calvinistic by the Jesuits, that man is a helplessly doomed being who must endure punishing soul-searching and rigorous penances to prove his love of God. Mere faith and constant church-going . . . are not

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*831 enough to win salvation. . . . Thanks to the influence of the French theo-
155 logians at Maynooth, most of the Irish Catholic hierarchy sided with the
175 British against Tone in the rebellion of 1798, and supported Prime Minister
178 William Pitt's Act of Union. Their forbidding and stern Jansenist theory
• 181 strongly flavored Irish Catholicism until it was finally officially discouraged
779 in the middle of the 19th Century. The last vestiges of the doctrine have
795 long since disappeared from Irish Catholicism, but the unusual devotion of
798 the Irish people today to physically punishing religious pilgrimages possibly
[785] could be traced in part back to the old teaching of Maynooth that love of
God must be demonstrated by harder acts than receiving the sacraments and
going to daily Mass (McCarthy 1964: 78).

*831 Our research reveals that in some areas of Ireland "the last vestiges
155 of the doctrine" are still associated with Irish Catholicism. In fact, one
178 Dublin social scientist with whom I correspond asserts that Jansenism
181 as manifested in sexual repression probably reached its zenith in the
779 1930s and has gradually been dying out since then. However, it is still
798 very apparent, even among "emancipated" Dubliners of the middle and
upper classes.

A much harsher evaluation of Jansenism, again in an historical context, is found in Bryan McMahon's chapter in *The Vanishing Irish*, edited by Fr. John O'Brien, a collection which also includes pertinent essays by Arland Ussher and the editor himself. McMahon says:

[785] Associated with the heresy of Jansenism were the principles of an exaggerated moral and disciplinary rigorism under the pretext of a return to the primitive Church. The Celtic spirit, despite or rather because of its essential volatility . . . would appear to me to provide an ideal field for the culture of Jansenism. The penances of the early Celtic monks were severity itself. . . . Today, when the idea of physical penance would appear to be repugnant to the entire world, such laudable manifestations of physical denial as the exercises of Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick are beacons amid the darkness. But the danger is that by a flaw in the Celtic nature we are apt to be led by overcompensation into penitential excesses; then it is that the traits of Jansenism are there to fill lacunae in our nature. Significant in this context [874] is the presence of four refugee doctors of the Sorbonne on the staff of Maynooth College in its early and formative years. [Their] teachings . . . cannot but have in some measure colored . . . the whole course of Irish seminary life and consequently the whole body of Irish lay thought (O'Brien 1953: 215-216).

Might not the "volatile nature" of the "Celtic spirit" and the "flaw in the Celtic nature" whose "lacunae" Jansenism fills be persistent maso-

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chism? Ussher addresses his remarks more directly to the sexual implications of Jansenism.

Certainly the puritanic bias of the Church in Ireland surprises visitors from other Catholic communities. It is often said that Irish schools and seminaries in the last century were infected with the remnants of Jansenism. . . . The dismal fact remains that Irishmen tend to regard procreation as a shameful necessity, and Irish girls grow up to think of sex as something dark, cold, and forbidding. Statistics are scarcely available, but it seems to me that the word "dirty" is used in modern Ireland in one sense only, namely, to cover every manifestation, even the most natural, of sex passion. . . . Irish married couples seldom give the impression of being biologically satisfied or even awakened; and if they are not, it may partly account for the slovenly, listless, don't care rather than devil-may-care quality of Irish life—the "spit" but never the "polish" (O'Brien 1953: 161-162).

It is interesting to note that Ussher, an Irishman, uses the word "puritanic." I have been severely criticized by Irish readers for using it in this and previous works, since it refers to an English religious movement as well as Cromwell's party.

The editor presents an equally down-to-earth pronouncement of the effects of Jansenism.

Here Father Murphy has singled out a factor of enormous importance in explaining the grotesque proportion of bachelors and spinsters among the Irish: the typical Irish attitude toward marriage, which, as he and many other priests have suggested, would seem to have an underlying touch of Jansenism. That attitude looks upon marriage and sex as rather regrettable necessities in the propagation of the race: it would have been much better if God had arranged for offspring in some other way. Irish parents shy away from the distasteful task of lifting the veil upon this earthy, unappealing, and somewhat unclean subject (O'Brien 1953: 105).

The plea for a less "distasteful" manner of reproduction was actually voiced by several Inis Beag women; and most island parents do not lift the "veil," in part because of their own ignorance of sexual matters.

The impact of the Oedipus complex on Irish character has been explored by cultural analysts and writers almost from the time Freud first conceptualized the phenomenon. Indeed, Freud might have been describing Ireland rather than a particular class in Austria at the turn of the century (just as Marx might have had Ireland in mind when positing religion as the opiate of the oppressed masses). Two recent con-

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539 beside them and do not really care for them at all. O'Casey's Juno offers
571 further positive support, and on the negative side, so to speak, are the
828 quantities of second-rate Irish plays and stories that have for their main-
829 spring a panic dislike of women, invariably represented as shrews, hussies,
and Aunt Sallies at whom anything can be thrown. A woman has only to
put her nose into a saloon bar . . . to realise that Almhuin is with us still
(Coxhead 1961: 145-146).

114 In concluding this section, I would like to mention briefly an in-
genious hypothesis of the cause of sexual repression in Ireland, presented
by Sean de Freine in *The Great Silence*. His book is the most "con-
vincing" expression to date of what linguists (outside of Ireland) term
"language determinism," a monism still popular in that country a century
after the advent of the Irish nativistic movement. Displaying a lack of
knowledge both of contemporary linguistic theory and of sexual ethics
in the "heart of the Gaeltacht," de Freine says:

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177 The Irish are often accused of a Jansenist approach to sex, which is supposed
178 to date from the French influence in the Irish Church in and just after the
penal times. But this attitude did not exist in Irish Ireland and does not
• 181 exist in the Gaeltacht today. It would seem as though, when English spread
• 831 throughout the country, it was English Puritanism and not French Jansenism,
795 which brought about the change. For example, certain English words with
779 prudish connotations were accepted, with their connotations, by the Irish,
while their equivalents in Irish have no such nuances. In its English setting
Puritanism was kept in reasonable check by the other native traditions: In
Ireland, as the old culture died, there were no such natural checks to con-
tain it (de Freine 1966: 164).

[28] Space does not permit me to consider other causal factors listed earlier
which are equally untenable.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS INCULCATION

* 831 The inculcation of sexual puritanism in Inis Beag must be examined
181 in four contexts: the role of the curate, the influence of visiting missions,
182 enculturation in the home, and what I will term "secular social control"
626 —the behavioral regulations imposed on themselves by Inis Beag adoles-

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cents and adults. It is through these agencies that Jansenism, masochism, the Oedipus complex, male solidarity, and other inextricably linked factors shape the severe sexual repression which gives rise to the cultural manifestations discussed in the last section of the chapter.

Priests of Jansenist persuasion have had subtle means of repressing the sexual instincts of the islanders in addition to the more extreme methods of controlling behavior—"clerical social control," such as employing informers, allocating indulgences, and refusing the sacraments to, and placing curses on, miscreants. Through sermons and informal classroom talks, the pulpit and the national school have served as effective vehicles of church discipline. The talks are especially telling, since they take advantage of the personality malleability of the formative years. The adult Irish person is rare who, although anticlerical, and even agnostic or atheistic, can transcend these early enculturative experiences, particularly in times of social crisis or personality disorganization. Erring islanders have often been sought out by priests and talked to privately after their ways have become known through gossip, informers, or the confessional. Some curates have suppressed courting, dancing, visiting, and other behavior either directly or "indirectly" (widely interpreted in Ireland) sexual in nature by physical action: that is, roaming the trails and fields at night seeking out young lovers and halting dancing by their threatening presence. This outward form of intrusion into island affairs is resented by most folk, as is the inward intrusion through priestly remonstrances; they question the right of the young, virginal, inexperienced, and sexually unknowledgeable curates to give advice in this sphere.

Church influence is also exerted through missions which visit Inis Beag every three to five years. On these occasions, two Redemptorist priests (occasionally Franciscans, Dominicans, or Passionists) spend a week on the island, where they conduct mass each morning and deliver long sermons in the chapel every afternoon or early evening. Everyone, even old people and mothers with young infants, is urged to attend to receive the "blessings of the mission." To some, this means shortening the time in purgatory for themselves or a deceased relative (an indulgence used to enforce church discipline). To others, absence carries with it the penalty of damnation; just as viewing an eel or small fish in the sacred well, appropriated from the Druids, promises salvation in an equally magical fashion. A mission usually has a theme, the variations of which are explored with high emotion and eloquence by the visiting clerics in

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govern our "morality, custom, and manners" (e.g., persuasion, ridicule, and gossip). I will not consider political and economic manipulation; more significant are other techniques that I have labelled secular social control. Inis Beag, as much as any human community, is characterized by gossip, ridicule, and opprobrium. Influenced by nativism, primitivism, and structural-functional theory, writers and social scientists have painted a distorted picture of culture and personality equilibrium among Irish peasants. Actually, the folk are neither glorified Celts nor "noble savages," and dysfunctional sociocultural forms, mental aberrations (neuroses, psychoses, and psychosomatic disorders), and exaggerated defense postures abound.

Inis Beag people are ambivalent about gossip; they welcome every opportunity to engage in it, yet detest the practice when they are its victims. When asked to cite the major deficiencies of their way of life, islanders usually place the prevalence of malicious gossiping near the top of their list. Boys and men hide themselves in the darkness or behind fences to overhear the conversations of passersby; they maintain close scrutiny of visitors during the summer, both day and night, in order to discover them in "compromising" situations. Parties are organized at the last moment and persons will leave the island without any previous announcement—often to emigrate or enter the hospital or join a religious order—in order to circumvent gossip. Rumors run rife in Inis Beag, especially when they concern, for example, the "nude" sun bathing of a visiting actress (bared shoulders and lower thighs) or the "attack" on a Dublin girl late at night by an island youth (an effort to hold her hand while under the influence of stout). Over a dozen efforts on our part to determine the truth behind the most pernicious rumors of this genre revealed sexual fantasy at their core in every case.

The force most responsible for limiting the potential social activities of women—which would make their lot much easier and possibly stem the tide of emigration—is the fear of gossip: "If I went for a walk, they'd wonder why I wasn't home tending my chores." Even couples who might otherwise disregard religious teachings and the wrath of the priest do not court, because it might be observed and reported through gossip to the entire population.⁷ An islander must carefully regulate his

⁷ The fear of being observed, as well as repression, may account for the apparent lack of sexual contact with animals. This practice may be common among mainland peasants, if one is willing to accept as evidence the existence of a genre of dirty jokes popular there, and hearsay among certain scholars concerning confessional materials.

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appears, however, that this argument is usually used as a rationalization 582
for late marriage, when other causal factors are, in reality, responsible—
certainly when "considering" covers two or more decades!

The population of Inis Beag has dropped from a high of 532 persons 161
in 1861 (up 76 from the prefamine census a decade earlier) to
497 in 1881, 483 in 1901, 409 in 1926, 376 in 1956, and 350 when
my wife and I were there two years later. Today, there is grave concern 168
over the future of the island, and some folk hold that within another
generation or two Inis Beag will have gone the way of the Blasket Islands.
Although my wife and I isolated almost two dozen causes for the phe- 167
nomena of late marriage and celibacy, over thirty interrelated causes
pertain to emigration (many of those at work in the marital sphere also 182
stimulate emigration). Once again, I will address only the principal 582
causes and stress the role of sexual repression, dealing first with internal 589
factors and then external ones promoting emigration.

Among internal causes, the previously considered inheritance pat-
tern, parents who want to maintain the family status quo for various
reasons, and the girls' and young women's increasing dissatisfaction with
their lot figure as prominently in the emigration picture as the marital.
Some Inis Beag men claim that the reason male youths are leaving the 434
island is economic depression, caused by the collapse of kelp-making and
the fishing industry. But this cause is untenable when one examines the 657
increase in government subsidies, remittances from relatives abroad, and
taxation and land rental policies; these have far more than made up for
the loss of previous revenue. Real income has increased substantially, 434
despite recent inflation, and young men are very much aware of this
fact. Just as late marriage has become institutionalized over the past 889
century, so has emigration since the first large-scale migration of islanders 178
in 1822. Emigration is a way of life, which will stimulate some folk to 582
leave in spite of other conditions which might lead an observer to advise
their remaining.

By far the most important reason for Inis Beag's long dwindling 891*
population is the total cultural impact of sexual puritanism and the secu-
lar "excesses" of the clergy. Blanshard writes, "When all the reasons 181 •
for a flight from Ireland have been mentioned, there still remains a 183
suspicion that Irish young people are leaving their nation largely because 829
it is a poor place in which to be happy and free. Have the priests created
a civilization in which the chief values of youth and love are subordinate
to Catholic discipline?" (Blanshard 1954: 154). What "remains a 167
suspicion" to Blanshard is fully confirmed by a wealth of data from Inis 182
181

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

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167 Beag, only limited amounts of which have been reported in this chapter.
182 Even though sexual repression and fear of the clergy prevent the folk
• [181] from being outspoken in this matter, it is constantly broached among
• [183] themselves.

167 Paramount among external factors stimulating emigration are pros-
177 perity on the mainland and abroad, the impact of the mass media of
182 communication, the increasing number of tourists visiting Inis Beag,
the return of former emigrants, and the fact that, with an increase in
incomes and scholarship funds, more island children are going to the
mainland for their schooling each year. America has been a land of
freedom and prosperity to the Irish since before the famine, and, until
the Second World War, most islanders migrated there never to return.
But the growth of prosperity in England following 1946 shifted the
stream of emigration in that direction, for not only were jobs plentiful
across the Irish Sea, but large, viable ethnic communities served by Irish
clergy had sprung up in big cities. And it was possible to visit Ireland
frequently, as the distance and cost are slight compared to a journey
across the Atlantic. It is common for youths vacationing in Inis Beag
from England to talk others into returning with them. The latter declare
167 that they will soon come back to the island to settle permanently, hope-
177 fully with "great riches," but they seldom return. Since the war, a
number of "Yanks" have also returned home, and their stories of life
in America make the youthful islanders restive. Tourists who remain for
weeks and months in Inis Beag and come to know many folk also sow
the seeds of discontent.

167 Television was introduced into Inis Beag during 1963, and the two
207 sets now installed always have ready and willing audiences. Almost
182 every cottage has a radio, and, although the islanders seldom read books,
177 a wide assortment of domestic and foreign magazines and newspapers
find their way into most homes. These mass media also are an emanci-
pating force making for restiveness and discontent, as they allow the
islanders to glimpse behind the "lace curtain" at what appears to be a
[656] happier and freer world. Television and radio programs are censored,
but, even so, the morality expressed in them—especially the sex and
violence drenched American ones—presents a striking contrast to locally
conceived moral precepts. A censor from Inis Beag would most certainly
create more discontinuities in films with his shears than do his much
maligned "secularized" colleagues in Dublin.

114 Most of what I have written in this essay is to be found expressed
in the works of such older Irish writers as James Joyce, Sean O'Casey,